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ALTA
SERIES

**As a Woman
Thinketh**

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S. DENISON & COMPANY

CHICAGO

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Borrowed Luncheon, 20 min.	5	
Borrowing Trouble, 20 min.	3	
Box and Cox, 35 min.	2	
Case Against Casey, 40 min.	23	
Convention of Papas, 25 min.	7	
Country Justice, 15 min.	8	
Cow that Kicked Chicago, 20 m.	3	

T. S. DENISON & COMPANY, Publishers, 154 W. Randolph St., Chicago

AS A WOMAN THINKETH

A COMEDY OF THE PERIOD

IN THREE ACTS

BY

EDITH F. A. U. PAINTON

AUTHOR OF

"A Prairie Rose" and "A Burns Rebellion"



CHICAGO

T. S. DENISON & COMPANY

PUBLISHERS

19142

AS A WOMAN THINKETH

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

CHARLES WILLIAM WEEDEN...*Just an Every-day Husband*
REV. DUNNING.....*A Pastor of the Past*
WILL WEEDEN.....*The Son, Inclined to be Wild*
CALEB MEAD.....*Olive's Husband, Always in the Shade*
JACK PHILLEY.....*Beth Weedens' Old Playmate*
CHARLES WHITNEY, otherwise "CHIP".....
.....*An Alleged Diamond in the Rough*
JOTHAM.....*The Man of All Work*
DR. HUME.....*The Weedens' Family Physician,*
.....*Not Quite an Old Foggy*
PROF. BABA MAJARAJAH...*A Hindu Lecturer on Psychology*
MRS. IDA JEANETTE WEEDEN.....
.....*Charles' Wife, a Mother of the Period*
BETH }
DOLLY }*The Weedens' Daughters*
OLIVE MEAD.....*The Weedens' Married Daughter,*
.....*Always in the Swim*
MRS. GERTRUDE PARKER...*Mrs. Weedens' Best Friend,*
.....*Secretary of the Modern Science Club*
MRS. DUNNING....*The Pastor's Wife, an Italicized Echo*
Suke...*The Colored Cook Who Has a Taste for the Beautiful*

PLACE—*Here, There or Anywhere.*

TIME—*Nineteen Hundred and Now.*

TIME OF PLAYING—*About Two Hours and Thirty Minutes.*

SYNOPSIS.

ACT I—The Weedens' Sitting-Room. Monday morning.
Resolution.

ACT II—The Breakfast Room. Tuesday Morning. *Revolution.*

ACT III—Same as Act I. An Afternoon. Three Weeks Later. *Evolution.*

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COSTUMES.

Modern up-to-date costumes, suited to characters represented.

SUKE AND JOTHAM—In grotesque attire to taste of performers.

PROF. MAJARAJAH—Appears in Oriental costume, with turban, scarlet sash, etc.

SYNOPSIS FOR PROGRAM.

ACT I—Mrs. Weeden undertakes to clean up. Jotham hunts a step-ladder and Mr. Weeden unloads a bit of his mind. A call from the pastor and his wife reminds the mother of her duty. "You are responsible for your family." Some startling family revelations. Chip introduces himself. Suke undertakes to "borrow" a few things and Olive secures some of her belongings. Jack finds a discarded glove. Mrs. Weeden meets a real Hindu and learns of a new philosophy. Her declaration of independence.

ACT II—The campaign opened. Jotham discovers what a fine mind he has and the whole family learn of virtues they were entirely unaware of possessing. The "subconscious mind" at work. Mr. Weeden airs his mind, but Mrs. Weeden smiles serenely on. The suspicions of the family are aroused. "Papa, what ails her?" Suke becomes surprisingly honest. "Are you all right, Mamma?" Chip learns what a fine fellow he is. "Jotham can do anything—yes, anything!" The professor helps "drive the nail." Jack promises to be patient, and the pastor and his wife make a call of condolence. Suke returns a quantity of borrowed property and the doctor gives some disturbing professional advice. "Love save my soul." "According to your faith."

ACT III—Birthday celebration. Beth is undecided in her love affairs. Caleb and Jotham display surprising ingenuity and ambition. The pastor and his wife come to investigate the strange rumors they have heard. Olive's economy ex-

cites comment. "Chew gum?—ugh!" "It's a miracle—a real miracle!" Chip's villainy is discovered and Beth learns her mind. Mrs. Weeden learns that she has been duped by an impostor. "Whoever he was, he was a Hindu to me!" Jack's patience is rewarded. "My poor lost glove!"

STORY OF PLAY.

Mrs. Weeden, a mother of the period, a slave to her house and family, attempts to clean up her disarranged sitting-room, and in the course of the morning's work learns several things to the disadvantage of her family. Her ideals meet with several serious falls when she is brought face to face with her husband's ill temper, her eldest daughter's extravagance, Beth's taste for improper company, Dolly's addiction to the use of slang and chewing gum and Will's use of cigarettes, to say nothing of Jotham's stupidity, Suke's dishonesty and her son-in-law's shiftlessness. A visit from the secretary of the Modern Science Club, who introduces a Hindu lecturer with many modern ideas and ideals, arouses her to a desire to make her family over to her taste, and she immediately puts the resolution into operation, to the great amusement of the observers but to the entire success of her plans and the final happiness of all concerned, unless it may be the pastor and his wife, who are but relics of a bygone age anyway. Each character is a distinct individual and each and everyone has a hand in the comedy, which ends, not as it for a time threatens, in an insane asylum, but in a renewed honeymoon and happy home.

PROPERTIES.

ACT I—Several sheets of newspaper, broom, scissors, scraps of paper, copy of "Ladies' Home Journal" with pictures cut out, handkerchiefs, aprons, neckties, collars, slippers, rubbers, suspenders, vest, caps, jacket, purse, veil,

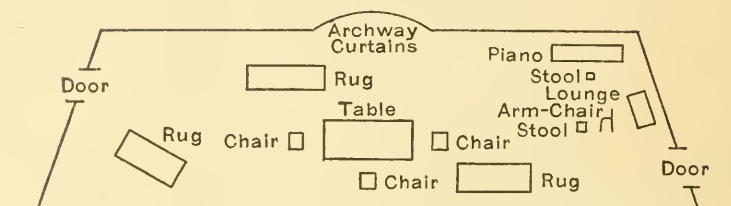
red hair ribbon, cud of gum, hairpins, hair "rat" and puffs, pipe, comb, belt, etc. Cigarette for Will. Gloves, etc.

ACT II—Broken chair for Jotham. Dishes, eatables, spoon, etc., for Suke and family. Coats, caps, toys, aprons, etc., on lounge. Cap, jacket, ballbat, ball, books, etc., for Will. Newspaper for Mr. Weeden. Empty purse for Dolly. Book for Jack. Lace handkerchief, black scarf, blue ribbon, white apron, fancy hairpin, scarfpin, charm, dollar and miscellaneous articles in bunch for Suke. Hat, gloves, overcoat and muffler for Mr. Weeden. Gum for Dolly. Cigarettes for Will.

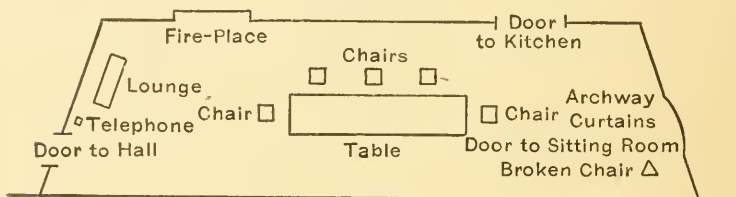
ACT III—Flag for Caleb. Step-ladder for Jotham. Bracelet for Suke. Flowers for Dr. Hume. Sunflowers tied with large bow of bright red ribbon for Jotham. Two vases, hat, jacket, and gloves for Mrs. Weeden. Glove for Jack.

STAGE SETTINGS.

ACTS I AND III.



ACT II.



STAGE DIRECTIONS.

R. means right of the stage; *C.*, center; *R. C.*, right center; *L.*, left; *1 E.*, first entrance; *R. 3 E.*, right entrance up stage, etc.; *U. E.*, upper entrance; *R. D.*, right door; *L. D.*, left door, etc.; *D. F.*, door in flat, or scene running across the back of the stage; up stage, away from footlights; down stage, near footlights; *1 G.*, first groove, etc. The actor is supposed to be facing the audience.

AS A WOMAN THINKETH

ACT I.

SCENE: *Sitting-room at the Weeden home. Table, C., literally covered with articles of wearing apparel, books, strings, etc., in helpless confusion. Chairs loaded and cluttered in a most disorderly heap. Rugs in a pile on floor. Newspaper in several scattered sheets, a broom, scissors and scraps of paper, copy of "Ladies Home Journal" with pictures cut out, handkerchiefs, aprons, neckties, collars, strewn over piano and floor, chairs and lounge. Under the lounge, slippers, rubbers, suspenders, caps, jackets; purse hanging on arm of chair, veil over back of another, etc. Motto, "Home, Sweet Home," hanging awry over archway at C. entrance, where portieres are draped. Doors R. and L. See Scene Plot for stage setting.*

As curtain rises MRS. WEEDEN stands just inside portieres, with hands on hips surveying scene ruefully and shaking head in despair.

MRS. W. (*after despairing pause*). O dear, dear, dear! Did anybody in all this world ever see such a looking house! And this is only one room! Multiply it by twelve and add bathroom, pantry and wardrobe and—O dear, dear, dear! (*Advances to pile of sofa cushions at foot of lounge and begins to dust them vigorously, piling them on big armchair.*) I declare, I just don't know where to commence. Love save my soul! (*Looks around again as though in utter despair, then goes R. entrance and calls.*) Suke! Suke! O Suke!

SUKE (*off R. after a pause*). Y-a-a-a-s, Missus! (*Sticks head in.*)

MRS. W. Do come right into the sitting-room this minute and—

SUKE. Yaas, Missus—in des a minute, Missus! (*Withdraws head.*)

MRS. W. (*unloading chairs and piling things on lounge*). It just seems to me that I can pick up, hang up, sweep up, wipe up, from morning till night, and then go to bed leaving things in no better shape than when I got up. (*Sighs.*) Not a bit! And 't isn't as if I was brought up that way, either. If mother could only see me now. It's just enough to make that dear old saint turn over in her grave in holy horror. (*Sighs again and begins to pick things up from the floor and piles them, too, on lounge.*) Charles' newspaper, Beth's slippers, Will's jacket. Humph! If here isn't Olive's purse she left over here last night; and her veil, too. Dolly's brand new red hair ribbon, Beth's collar, the scissors. Will's been cutting out pictures again on the carpet, I see—and out of my new "Ladies' Home Journal," too, that I haven't had a minute to read. O dear, dear, dear! And what's this stuck fast to the corner of the table? Dolly's gum—*gum*, as I'm alive! O dear, dear, dear! And look at those hairpins of Beth's on the piano! And what's this? (*Holds up hair "rat" and puffs.*) Love save my soul! (*Blows top of piano and dust rises in thick cloud.*) They must have had a feast on the piano stool. Cracker crumbs, cake, orange peeling, fudge—O dear, dear, dear! (*Goes R. entrance again and calls.*) Suke! Suke! Suke, I say!

SUKE (*off R. as before*). Yaas, Missus! In a minute, Missus!

MRS. W. Her minutes must be colored minutes—longer than white ones. (*Turns back to work.*) Suke's a good girl, and I've always thought there was no one in the world like a colored maid—they're such exceptionally fine cooks and nurses, but—(*sighs*)—if she only wouldn't—wouldn't—I don't like to say "lie" or "steal," even to myself, but that's what it amounts to. (*Has everything loaded on the lounge and chairs now and begins to sweep, dust rising furiously.*) Anyway, no one can deny that she does stretch the truth terribly every time she tries to handle it, and that she has a regular mania for borrowing everything that attracts her eye, without remembering to ask the owner's permission, and then, of course, as completely forgetting to return it. (*Looks up at ceiling.*) O what a cobweb!

(*Sweeps down.*) And how crooked that picture hangs! And what a load of dust on it! I don't wonder that motto gets terribly out of shape in this household. (*Stands chair and attempts to reach, but cannot.*) I must have a step-ladder. (*Goes L. and calls.*) Jotham! Jotham! *Jotham!* I might as well call the hitching-post, I suppose. Jotham, I say! O dear, dear, dear! Where is the stupid fellow now, I wonder? He's never around if there's any danger of his being wanted. All the sense he has seems to be consumed in hiding away from work. (*Turns back to sweeping.*) Well, I can't waste time and breath yelling at him. I suppose I'll have to let it go. It matches well with the rest of the house, anyway. (*Sweeps violently a moment.*) I wonder where Beth is? She should have been home a full hour ago. She seems to take an unearthly long time to go to the post-office nowadays.

JOTHAM *enters L, stands twirling a stick in his hand and watching her foolishly.*

MRS. W. I need her help so much. But I never seem to get any further than the needing of it.

JOTHAM (*clearing throat to attract her attention.*) Ahem! (*She does not hear.*)

MRS. W. I do hope she is not forming any undesirable associations.

JOTHAM (*a little more loudly.*) Ahem!

MRS. W. (*still sweeping vigorously.*) Dear me! It's such a task to bring up a girl in the right way!

JOTHAM (*still more loudly.*) Ahem!

MRS. W. (*continuing her sweeping.*) I never seem to get a bit of a chance, either, to talk to her, or look into her affairs as I know I should.

JOTHAM (*very loudly.*) Ahem!

MRS. W. (*drops broom and screams.*) O-o-o-o-h! (*Sees JOTHAM and after panting a little picks up broom.*) Love save my soul! How you startled me, Jotham!

JOTHAM (*meekly.*) Yes, mum.

MRS. W. (*sternly.*) Jotham where's your hat?

JOTHAM (*in confusion*). Why—why—I don't know. (*She stares at him and he feels head in frightened way.*) Ain't it—on my head, Mum?

MRS. W. It certainly is. Is that the place for it, Jotham?

JOTHAM. Why—why—I—don't know, Mum.

MRS. W. Take it off this instant, young man!

JOTHAM (*meekly*). Yes, Mum! (*He snatches hat off and holds awkwardly between both hands during remainder of scene, twisting it around and looking very foolish.*)

MRS. W. Dear me! (*Fans herself with apron.*) I haven't got over that scare yet. Where did you come from?

JOTHAM (*giggles*). Te-hee! Didn't you call me, Mum?

MRS. W. To be sure I did!

JOTHAM. Wall, Mum—(*giggles*)—te-hee! Didn't I come?

MRS. W. Well, now that you've come, bring me the step-ladder right away. (*Resumes work.*)

JOTHAM (*stands twisting hat, eyeing her uncertainly for a minute, then clears throat and speaks*). The—the—the what, Mum?

MRS. W. (*turning quickly*). Mercy on me, Jotham! Are you there yet?

JOTHAM. Yes, Mum, I—I—I—think so.

MRS. W. Well, why aren't you gone?

JOTHAM. Why—why—I don't know, Mum.

MRS. W. Well, hustle now. I've no time to waste. (*Resumes work.*)

JOTHAM. But, Mum—

MRS. W. (*turns to him angrily*). Jotham!

JOTHAM (*trembles with fear*). Y-y-y-y-es, M-m-m-mum.

MRS. W. Well?

JOTHAM. What was it, Mum, you said you wanted?

MRS. W. (*exasperated*). The step-ladder!

JOTHAM (*mystified*). Step—ladder?

MRS. W. (*very emphatically*). Yes, step-ladder! Don't you know what a step-ladder is?

JOTHAM. I—I—don't know, Mum. (*Shakes head in puzzled way.*)

MRS. W. O dear me! Was there ever such a blockhead?

I want it to step on—see? (*Pantomimes.*) To walk up—stand on top—straighten picture up there—see?

JOTHAM (*grasps her meaning and speaks eagerly*). O yes, Mum—yes, Mum—you want to climb up, up, up—stand—fix picture. (*Pantomimes.*)

MRS. W. (*grimly*). Exactly!

JOTHAM (*delightedly*). I know! I know!

MRS. W. (*sarcastically*). Bright boy!

JOTHAM (*claps hat on head, grins enthusiastically and runs out L.*). I get him! Yes, I get him! (*Exits.*)

MRS. W. (*watching him*). That boy is certainly the dumbest boy that ever tried to hold down a job. I do wish I could ever manage to drive one grain of sense into his thick head! (*Sweeps.*)

MR. WEEDEN *enters C.*

MR. WEEDEN. Why, Nettie Weeden, what in the world are you doing?

MRS. W. (*sarcastically, still sweeping*). Playing the piano.

MR. W. (*dodging the dust, goes L.*). Humph! What in the world—

MRS. W. Better keep back out of the way, Charles William. You may get a little bit dusty.

MR. W. Humph! Should say so. (*Attempts to cross to R., but is stopped by cloud of dust.*) Whew! (*She turns to sweep in his direction and he crosses to R., goes up.*) Jehosaphat! (*His temper rises and the commotion seems to increase.*) Great Cæsar! And all the dead Romans! (*MRS. W. goes to chair, picks up cushions and pounds them fiercely. He dodges.*) I'll be—

MRS. W. Careful what you say, Charles William!

MR. W. (*still dodging*). Careful! Good Lord! There aren't English words enough in all the dictionaries that have ever been printed to express what I'd like to say! Careful! Good Lord! And with an earthquake like this in a man's own parlor! Great Cæsar! I don't blame these fellows who can afford a club for staying—

MRS. W. Charles William.

MR. W. (*unheeding her interruption*)—away from their loving families until their homes are at least undisturbed, and torn to pieces by such a confounded, infer—

MRS. W. Charles William!

MR. W.—infernally, dodgasted—(*noise of bumping and dragging some heavy object out L.*) Now, what in the name of all the holy saints and martyrs—

MRS. W. Sh! (*Noise outside increases.*)

MR. W. But I can't understand, Ida Jeanette Weeden, why—

JOTHAM *enters L.*

JOTHAM (*trundling empty barrel*). It's awful heavy, Mum!

MR. W. A barrel?

JOTHAM. Terrible heavy! (*Stands it up on end, bottom up, and pauses to wipe face.*) But I got him! There was a lot of stuff in it—full up, Mum. But I emptied it out on the shed floor. (*Grins.*) I got him! You bet! Now where did you want it, Mum?

MRS. W. Why, Jotham, I didn't—

MR. W. What in all Christendom did you bring that confounded barrel in here for? (*Looks around room scornfully.*) To store things in? Or are we going to move? It certainly does look to me that there's already enough junk here without—(*his voice rises angrily on every word.*)

MRS. W. (*trying to pacify him*). It's all right, Charles William, I—

MR. W. All right? Humph! What's it for?

JOTHAM (*in some excitement*). Why—why—to climb up—up—up—stand top—fix picture! (*Gestures frantically in his excited explanation.*)

MR. W. Oh! I see! But why a barrel? Was the step-ladder in use?

JOTHAM (*shakes head as if mystified*). Step-ladder?

MR. W. The idea of lugging in a great barrel like that to stand on, when—O, the idiotic, brainless, pig-headed—

MRS. W. (*uneasy and alarmed*). Charles William!

MR. W.—empty skulled fool! There, now! (*with an air of triumph at having spoken his mind.*) Just come with me,

now, you—you—you chump! (*Takes JOTHAM by the arm to lead him out L.*) And I'll show you what a step-ladder is, and how to carry—

MRS. W. No, no, Charles William. Really this will have to do. I can stand on it. I *must* stand on it. I just must get through with this! I haven't time to wait for—

MR. W. But I tell you, Ida Jeanette Weeden, that I want to teach this—

MRS. W. No, no! I must use the barrel. Put it right here, Jotham. (*Goes to position in front of curtains at back and motions imperatively.*)

MR. W. (*with great authority*). Take it out to the barn at once, Jotham.

MRS. W. (*firmly*). Put it here, I said, Jotham! (*He starts.*)

MR. W. Jotham! I said take it out! Did you hear? Take it out—out—out!

JOTHAM (*who has been moving uncertainly in obedience to each command, now stops and scratches his head*). Gee whiz! (*MR. W. stumbles backward over chair.*)

MRS. W. (*seizes opportunity and motions to JOTHAM*). Here! (*He hurries it into position. She stands on chair and climbs on barrel.*) Now you run on out to your work. I'll call you when I'm ready to have you take it out. (*JOTHAM grins and hurries L., looking over shoulder at MR. W.*)

MR. W. (*suddenly sees him as he is leaving, speaks angrily*). Jotham!

JOTHAM (*turns back with fear*). Yes, sir.

MR. W. (*starts, tumbles over broom*). O, deuce take this everlasting—

MRS. W. Charles William! (*Motions to JOTHAM, who runs out L., frightened.*)

MR. W. Yes, "Charles William! Charles William!" That's me, all right; but what in the dev—

MRS. W. (*looking back over shoulder from barrel*). Charles William! (*He turns away in disgust.*) O, by the way, dear, won't you hand me the dust-cloth, so I won't have to climb down?

MR. W. (*turning back*). Where? (*Hunts floor, picks up handkerchief.*) This?

MRS. W. No, that's Will's handkerchief.

MR. W. (*holds up gingham apron*). This?

MRS. W. No, that's Beth's apron.

MR. W. (*after looking around helplessly and pulling things from sofa to floor in exasperation*). I can't find it! What sort of a thing is it? Everything here looks like a dust-cloth to me.

MRS. W. Never mind, I'll get it. (*Descends from barrel.*)

MR. W. Well, Ida Jeanette, I may be home to lunch—and I may not. I'll call up, and if the atmosphere here is any clearer, I'll—I'll—(*looks around room in disgust.*) O gol darn it all, I'll—

MRS. W. Charles William, are you aware that you are speaking to your wife?

MR. W. No other woman would drive me to such an infer—(*attempting to back out, stumbles over a footstool*)—thunder and lightning! Moses and Aaron and all the prophets of Israel! (*Nurses foot.*)

MRS. W. Well, why didn't you look where you were going?

MR. W. Look? Heavenly hosts! Have I got eyes in all sides of my head? The devilish—

MRS. W. (*in exasperation*). Charles William, *did* you know—*had* you noticed that your wife is in the room?

MR. W. If she isn't, she's the only object, living or dead, in this d-d-d—

MRS. W. (*horrified*). Charles William!

MR. W.—darned old house that isn't in the room, and I'll be teetotally blown to thunder if I'll be imposed on—(*exits R., muttering*).

MRS. W. (*still searching for duster*). O dear, dear, dear! Charles William is such a good man, the very-best man in the world, I'm sure, if he only would try to control his temper and leave out all those terrible swears, and—and—(*picks up necktie and pair of suspenders, a vest and a pipe while talking*)—and take a little better care of his

belongings. It seems as though I've been picking up after that blessed man all my life. And dear me, how angry he is! He never calls me "Ida Jeanette" in that provoking, exasperating way, unless he's in one of his worst tantrums. It's always "Nettie" when he's even half way good-natured. (*Looks up at picture.*) Not cleaned yet! And no dusting-cloth to be found in all this pile of things and nothings! I'll just use a corner of my apron. (*Mounts barrel again and rubs vigorously at motto.*) Love save my soul! It must be two inches thick with pure unadulterated dust!

Enter REV. and MRS. DUNNING, R. They survey MRS. W. in dismay, holding up hands in horror.

REV. DUNNING. Why, Sister Weeden!

MRS. DUNNING. Yes, indeed, Sister Weeden!

MRS. W. (*turning around with a scream*). Why, Mr. Dunning—I mean, of course, Brother Dunning! (*Tries to get down hurriedly.*)

REV. D. Let me help you. Be careful.

MRS. D. (*anxiously*). Very careful! (REV. D. *holds barrel steady while MRS. W. descends. Then, wiping hand on apron, she offers it to REV. D.*)

MRS. W. Good morning, Brother Dunning. (*Turns to MRS. D., holding out hand.*) And Sister Dunning, too. It was so—so—so—good of you to look in on me this morning. It really was. But—but—(*looks around room*) such a place as this to come in! (*Unloads a couple of chairs as hastily as possible, her guests watching her during following speeches.*)

REV. D. Yes, Sister Weeden—your house—what are you doing?

MRS. D. What are you doing?

REV. D. Cleaning house?

MRS. D. Cleaning house *so early*?

MRS. W. O dear, dear, dear, dear! It is clean house every day and all day, late and early, in this house. Everything is always out of place. And heaven knows I try hard enough to live up to my early training. (*Sighs.*)

REV. D. Early training? (*Looking significantly at Mrs. D.*)

MRS. D. Training? (*Nodding to Rev. D.*)

REV. D. So much depends on early training.

MRS. D. Everything, you might say, depends on training.

MRS. W. Here are some empty chairs at last. Do sit down, please.

REV. D. O but we can't stay a minute, Sister Weeden.

MRS. D. Not a minute.

MRS. W. O, you must—a minute, surely. It was so good of you to call. But as I was saying, mother was such a perfect housekeeper—everything spotless and ship-shape. I never saw a thing out of order in her house after nine o'clock in the morning, not a speck of dirt from garret to cellar. Blessings on her New England soul! And I loved it—I adored it—I'm just simply crazy about a clean house, and well-behaved, good-mannered children. It's born in me. And now, look at this. (*With impressive gesture.*) Is there one thing where it ought to be? It's enough to make poor mother turn over in her grave with horror, if she could see what I've come to, after the way she brought me up. (*Sighs.*) It seems to me, as Mr. Weeden sometimes says:

“Train up a child in the way he should go,
And when he gets old, why away he'll go!”

REV. D. (*shocked*). O Sister Weeden! How terrible!

MRS. D. (*imitating him*). How wicked!

MRS. W. But you never had children, Brother Weeden.

REV. D. No.

MRS. D. Never.

MRS. W. Then you can't really know how hard they are to manage and keep straight. It's a constant care and worry.

REV. D. But you are responsible for them, Sister Weeden.

MRS. D. Responsible for every one of them.

REV. D. Everybody blames you, you know, for—for—everything.

MRS. D. Whatever they say and do.

MRS. W. (*helplessly*). O dear, dear, dear, dear!

REV. D. And that reminds me, Sister Weeden, we called to see Beth.

MRS. D. Yes, just to see Beth.

MRS. W. (*surprised*). Beth?

REV. D. Yes.

MRS. D. Of course.

REV. D. We want her in the choir.

MRS. W. In the choir?

MRS. D. Yes, in the choir.

MRS. W. (*flattered by the offer but evidently worried*). Well, it is very kind of you to think of her, I'm sure, and Beth can sing, too, very sweetly, when she takes a notion. But, you see—er—she doesn't—well, she doesn't like to go to practice so often as she'd have to, with the choir, and—and—she likes her amusements, and—and—(REV. D. and MRS. D. *exchange glances*.)

REV. D. And that is the very reason why we thought best—

MRS. D. To get her to join the choir.

REV. D. We thought we had better tell you—

MRS. D. Yes, we really thought we had better—

MRS. W. (*in alarm, sinking on lounge with all its pile of things*). What?

REV. D. Well, it isn't a pleasant duty—

MRS. D. Not a very pleasant duty—

REV. D. But we thought you ought to know—

MRS. D. Yes, you surely ought to know—

MRS. W. O, what is it? Tell me! Quick, quick, quick!

REV. D. Be patient, Sister Weeden.

MRS. D. Yes, you must be patient, sister. (MRS. W. *bows head in hands with gesture of despair*.)

REV. D. Do you know that new young man from Corunna?

MRS. D. That wild young man from Corunna.

MRS. W. From Corunna? (*They nod*.) Why, no!

REV. D. We felt that you didn't.

MRS. D. We were quite sure that you didn't.

REV. D. His name is Chip Whitney.

MRS. W. Chip Whitney?

MRS. D. (*emphatically*). Chip Whitney!

MRS. W. (*puts hand to forehead, trying to remember*). I believe I have some time or other heard the name mentioned in the house. It struck me as being such a—a—peculiar name. He's the new—er—er—let me see—what does he do?

REV. D. (*severely*). He tends bar.

MRS. W. (*shocked*). Tends bar?

MRS. D. (*nodding, with lips compressed in disapproval*). In Gute's saloon!

MRS. W. (*bewildered*). But why should I—

REV. D. He is very frequently seen promenading the streets with your Beth.

MRS. D. Every day he's walking the streets with Beth.

MRS. W. Beth? (*They nod.*) My Beth? (*They nod.*) O I just can't believe it! There must be some mistake, surely. It can't be with my Beth.

REV. D. O there's no mistake, Sister Weeden.

MRS. D. No mistake at all about it.

MRS. W. My Beth! O dear, dear, dear, dear! Why Beth never seemed to take any notice of any boy anywhere but Jack Philley. She and Jack have run around together ever since they were small children. (*Dazed.*) I—can't—seem to understand it at all. It was—always—Jack.

REV. D. Yes, I know—until Chip came.

MRS. D. Till Chip came to town.

REV. D. It is a grievous affliction, Sister Weeden.

MRS. D. A very grievous affliction.

MRS. W. (*wringing hand*). O what can I do? What can I do?

REV. D. Do? You must stop it. (*Rises while speaking.*)

MRS. D. Stop it at once. (*Also rising.*)

REV. D. Remember, you alone are responsible for your family.

MRS. D. You are altogether responsible.

MRS. W. (*rising and standing before them with hands*

clasped). O are you sure there is no mistake? Is it really my Beth?

REV. D. Yes, we are quite sure. Everybody's talking about it.

MRS. D. (*nodding*). Everybody in town.

MRS. W. (*wringing hands*). O dear, dear, dear, dear!

Enter BETH, R.

BETH. O Mamma, I—Why, Rev. and Mrs. Dunning, how do you do? (*Shakes hands with them. They seem triumphant. She looks over shoulder while shaking hands, calling.*) Come in, Chip.

REV. D. (*turns to MRS. W., aside*). What did we tell you?

MRS. D. (*same business*). What have we been saying? (*MRS. W. drops head.*)

Enter CHIP, R., with tough swagger, the carriage of a bully.

CHIP. Aw, I'm in a deuce of a sweat! No time to chin. Got a 'pointment down to Gute's to help some chumps kill a Chinaman. They'll be disappointed if I don't come. (*Looks at MRS. W. and grins familiarly.*) Just brought Beth home. 'Fraid some one 'ud steal her.

REV. D. (*emphasizing the surname significantly*). Miss Weeden must have been very grateful.

MRS. D. Yes, Miss Weeden must certainly appreciate your attention.

CHIP (*advancing*). By hookey, now if here ain't the parson. 'Tain't often I gits myself introduced into such swell society. Shake, old fellow! (*REV. D. puts hand behind back and steps back.*) No? Well, no harm done. The Lord'll give me credit for trying to join hands with the church. (*Laughs.*) That's a good one, ain't it? (*Turns to MRS. D.*) And is this your side partner, pal? Gee! She ain't so much on gait, is it, but I bet she's the best horse of the two. Shake, lady.

MRS. D. (*putting her hand behind her*). Pardon me, young man, but—

CHIP. O all right. Just as you say. I just wanted to be sociable. (*Turns to REV. D.*) Got her well broke in, ain't

you, pardner? A fellow couldn't make a mash on her if he had the nerve to try.

REV. D. Did you ever see such deplorable depravity before?

MRS. D. Ever in all your life?

CHIP. O, I'm a black sheep, I am, all right. (*Laughs.*) Can't help it, though. You fellows have to have us sinners or you couldn't run your sin mills, you know! (*Turns to MRS. W.*) Now, Mrs. Weeden, now that Beth's all to the good in the bosom of her home—and the church—(*laughs and bows to REV. D. and MRS. D. mockingly*), I'll have to beat it for town. So long, Beth. See you tonight.

BETH. Sure. Good-bye. (*CHIP exits R. with swagger. They hear the door slam outside in hall and hear him outside, whistling some popular air. They listen in strained silence till the whistle dies away.*)

REV. D. We must go now, too, Sister Weeden.

MRS. D. We really must go. (*BETH takes off hat and tosses it on table. Fires gloves after it. One falls on floor.*)

MRS. W. Well, I can only say, thank you for coming.

REV. D. We will come again.

MRS. D. Come again soon.

REV. D. Remember you alone are responsible—

MRS. D. For your family.

REV. D. Good morning, Sister Weeden. (*Bowing low to her.*) And Miss Beth. (*Turns and bows to BETH, who nods coldly.*)

MRS. D. Good morning, both of you. (*Bows to each and they respond. Takes REV. DUNNING'S arm and they exit R., MRS. W. following them out, politely.*)

BETH. Wonder what's up. Mamma looks as though she had been sick a year, and Rev. and Mrs. Dunning looked as if they had something up their sleeves. Somebody's in for it, all right, all right. Wonder if it's poor little me. I do wish Chip hadn't been drinking. He don't cut much of a figure in refinement after he's a glass too much.

MRS. W., *re-entering.*

MRS. W. Well, my daughter—

BETH. What in all Christendom, Mamma, ails our good preacher and his obedient echo? Isn't she a prime copy? Just the perfect pattern of a model wife that never thinks any but her lord and master's thoughts? I can hardly keep from laughing right in her face sometimes. The boys call her his *italics*—and doesn't she put the emphasis nicely on all he says?

MRS. W. (*trying listlessly to pick up things from the floor*). Beth, Beth! You musn't be so rude as to criticize our guests.

BETH. Guests? Humph! What did they want? Some butting-in, I know.

MRS. W. (*turns to BETH reprovingly*). You are unjust, Beth. They wanted you to sing in the choir.

BETH. Choir? (MRS. W. *nods*.) Well, that's rich. (*Sings.*)

“From Greenland's icy mountains,
From India's coral strand,
They call us to deliver—”

Humph! Was that really what they came for, Mamma?

MRS. W. Beth, am I in the habit of telling you untruths?

BETH. No, Mamma. Forgive me. But why didn't they say so to me?

MRS. W. Well, Beth, when you came in as you did with that—that—that—

BETH. Chip?

MRS. W. That fellow, whoever he is—

BETH (*with dignity*). Mr. Charles Whitney, Mamma—that's who he is. But everybody who knows him calls him “Chip.”

MRS. W. (*after a pause, wondering what to say*). Where was Jack?

BETH. Bother Jack! (*Fumbles confusedly with things on table.*)

MRS. W. But I thought that you and Jack—

BETH (*sulkily*). Jack's a stick!

MRS. W. (*firmly*). Jack's a gentleman.

BETH. Well, then, all I can say is that gentlemen are

poky and stiff, and conceited and bossy, and—and—behind the times. Chip's full of fun—got some life—some sparkle to him—and more inclined to give a girl a good time in one hour that Jack Philley would in ten years. He may not have Jack's polish—

MRS. W. (*significantly*). I should say not!

BETH (*defiantly*). But he's a—a—a real diamond in the rough, and—and—I don't think Jack's got a single thing to say about it.

MRS. W. Well, Beth, your father and I certainly have something to say about it.

BETH. Humph!

MRS. W. We—we—we are responsible for our family.

BETH. Humph!

MRS. W. And it is our duty to know where you are and what sort of company you are keeping.

BETH. O Mamma, I—

MRS. W. (*unheeding*). So, until we know more about this young man, and the life he leads in town, and the reputation he bears, and all that, I forbid your being seen with him again—

BETH (*steps forward in protest*). Mamma!

MRS. W. And refuse to allow you to receive him in our home. Do you understand?

BETH (*turns away from MRS. W. and walks to L. entrance*). Yes, I understand. (*Pauses, looking out L. sadly. Then wheels and walks back toward MRS. W. at R, talking rapidly and vehemently.*) And I understand, too, that there's nothing right, nor fair, nor—nor—good about it, and that it's all the work of that meddling old preacher—

MRS. W. Beth! Beth!

BETH. Will's a boy, if he is only a kid, so he can bum around with all the little toughs in town, and smoke cigarettes, and—

MRS. W. (*shocked*). Cigarettes!

BETH (*emphatically*). Yes, cigarettes—the real thing, too! Dolly don't happen to be so lucky as to be a boy, but she can chew gum and use slang, and be as vulgar as she

pleases. But I—I—I am almost seventeen, and I can't even choose my own friends. There just ain't anything fair about it—so there! (*Walks C. entrance, half crying. At entrance turns back again.*) As for Jack Philley, I—I—fairly hate the sight of him, and I hope I'll never, never, never have to speak to him again! (*Exits.*)

MRS. W. (*watches entrance a moment as if fascinated, stunned by the blow she has just received*). Cigarettes! My Will! My Willie boy! What shall I do? (*Sits on lounge in sad reflection. After pause.*)

Enter SUKE, C.

SUKE. Shall we-uns do be cleaning up now, Mum?

MRS. W. (*rousing with effort*). Yes, Suke. Yes; we must.

SUKE (*beginning to pick up things*). Dis heah room suah do seem like a cyclone done struck it. (*Picks up handkerchief, eyes MRS. W. cautiously and sticks it in front of waist. MRS. W. turns around just in time to see her.*)

MRS. W. Suke!

SUKE (*innocently*). Yes'm.

MRS. W. That handkerchief.

SUKE (*greatly surprised*). What han'cher, mum?

MRS. W. (*sternly*). The one you just put in your waist, Suke.

SUKE (*pulling it out with air of unconcern*). Lawsy, Mum, I jus' done put dat in dar, kase I done gwine take it to de wash, Mum. Yas'm.

MRS. W. (*amazed at such an excuse*). The wash?

SUKE. Yas'm. (*Holds it up and looks at it.*) It am powerful dirty, Mum.

MRS. W. (*sarcastically*). And do you usually carry the soiled laundry around in your waist?

SUKE. Why, no, Mum—not generally speaking, Mum, I doesn't do dat; but yo' sees it do seem pow'ful handy in all dis heah both'ration, Mum.

MRS. W. Well, I think you had better let me see to the laundry, Suke.

SUKE (*meekly*). Yes'm. (*Hands handkerchief to her reluctantly.*)

OLIVE *at L., looking in, then entering.*

OLIVE. Mother! O you're in here, are you? Mercy on me! What a litter! Where's my purse? I left it—dear me! What a mess this room does get in! (*SUKE stuffs veil into neck of dress, one little end showing at neck.*)

MRS. W. Your purse is right here, Olive, hanging on the back of the chair. Isn't that just where you left it?

OLIVE. O I suppose so. (*Indifferently. Takes it, opens, etc.*) Thank you.

MRS. W. Your veil is here, too—right—why, where has that veil disappeared to all of a sudden? (*Looks at SUKE suspiciously, who is on her knees, picking up scraps of paper and does not seem to hear anything.*) Suke!

SUKE (*jumps as if startled, looks back over shoulder*). Yes'm.

MRS. W. What did you do with the veil that hung on this chair with my daughter's purse?

SUKE. Sakes alive, honey, dis heah chile ain't seed nuffin' o' no veil.

MRS. W. Suke!

SUKE (*rises*). Fo' de Lawd, Mum, I done hain't seed a thing—

MRS. W. (*pulls veil from her neck*). What is this? Olive, isn't this your veil?

OLIVE (*taking it*). Why, of course.

SUKE. What? Dat ar scahf—a veil? Why, I done t'ought it war, Miss Beff's fum-a-diddle thing what she weahs aaround her neck, and ovah her head, an' I was done gwine take it to her foah it done got losted.

MRS. W. Very kind of you, Suke, I'm sure; but we will let the ladies look after their own property after this. Do you understand? Either you stop touching things that don't belong to you, in this way, or I shall have to let you go.

SUKE. Yo' doan mean discharge me, Mum? Suah, now, you cawn't be meanin' dat to dis poah chile! I des wants

to help de young ladies keep twack ob dere t'ings, dat's all.
(*Gets back on knees at work.*)

MRS. W. Well, it must not happen any more—any more. Do you understand?

OLIVE. Oh, there's my comb, too—and my belt. (*Takes them from piano and puts in purse.*)

MRS. W. I do wish, Olive, that you wouldn't leave your things over here. Why do you do it?

OLIVE (*carelessly*). Just forget them, Mother. Don't mean to. Wouldn't have thought of them again in a week, most likely. But I need my purse. There's a big sale on at Marston's. Those dollar silks are going for ninety-eight-and-a-half cents this week, and I simply must have a new gown. Caleb is just as mean as he can be about it. He won't do a thing to help me. He's just too shiftless and good-for-nothing to breathe when he's not actually compelled to. But I'll have this dress if I—

MRS. W. Olive, it does seem to me that you are very extravagant, and—and—just a little careless with your nice things. You certainly are not very saving of the money Caleb does earn. Now, if you—

OLIVE. Now, don't you go preaching, Mother. I like nice things, and I am bound to have just all of them that I can get. A woman is certainly entitled to some compensation for the sort of a life a worthless man makes her, and—
(*SUKE rises while OLIVE talks and stares at her grinning.*)

MRS. W. (*seeing SUKE*). Hush, Olive! Remember we are not alone.

OLIVE. O Suke knows what a miserable life I lead, and—what a mistake—

MRS. W. Olive! Don't!

OLIVE. Poor old Mother! She *will* be behind the times. (*Embraces her and goes R.*) Good-bye. When I come home I'll have a brand new silk gown as fine as anybody. And I'll come over to get you to help me make it. It's so nice that you have Suke to do the work, so you won't have anything to do yourself. (*Exits R. After a pause sticks her head in again.*) Now, don't you dare scold about my finery, Mother. When a wife has a rag doll to live with, it's her

bounden duty to dress her own self in silks, to keep people from learning the truth about the sawdust stuffing. (*Laughs rather cynically.*) Good-bye, for sure this time. (*Exits.*)

MRS. W. Dear me! What Olive and Caleb are ever coming to, I'm sure I don't know! She is as much of a care to me as she was before they were married! Just!

SUKE. Shall I done carry some of dese heah things out now? (MRS. W. *is thinking, with her head turned, and SUKE snatches DOLLY'S hair ribbon and sticks it in her sleeve.*)

MRS. W. (*turning suddenly*). Why, I don't know. (*Sees ribbon.*) I will take care of Miss Dolly's ribbon, Suke.

SUKE. Yes'm. I was jes' gwine take it up to her room fo' her, Mum.

MRS. W. Of course. Such a handy way of carrying it. (*Sarcastically.*)

SUKE. Suah, now, Mum, yo' doan done t'ink—

Enter JACK, R., suddenly.

SUKE. O golly gwacious! (*Sinks to knees again, behind table, and straightens rug.*)

MRS. W. (*turns suddenly and is startled*). O-o-o-o-h!—Why—Jack Philley!

JACK. Pardon me, Mrs. Weeden, I didn't mean to startle you. The door was open and I invited myself to walk right in. (*Pauses, twisting cap in embarrassment.*) Is—is—is Beth in?

MRS. W. (*with some confusion*). I am not sure, Jack. She came in awhile ago with—with—

JACK (*bitterly*). With that Chip Whitney!

MRS. W. (*hurriedly*). And she left her hat here, I see, and her gloves. So she is probably—

JACK (*breaking in hastily and walking R.*). Never mind, Mrs. Weeden. I am sorry I bothered you. I can't wait to see Beth. I—I don't think I want to see her. If she came with—

MRS. W. (*walking toward him*). O Jack, don't—

JACK (*turning and facing her impetuously*). Why do you let her—

MRS. W. I didn't know, Jack, until just—

JACK. Didn't know? Why, it's been going on for weeks and weeks!

MRS. W. Weeks and weeks?

JACK. And I—I—(*walks toward table with head bowed, stands silently a moment, looking down.*) Well, you see, I'm thrown away, just like this worn-out glove. (*Picks up BETH'S glove from floor.*) Yes, just like this poor old glove!

MRS. W. (*follows him, lays hand on shoulder*). I'm so sorry, my boy—I really am. I don't understand a thing about the affair yet, but—(*sighs and walks to lounge, punching the pillows and endeavoring to straighten a little.*)

JACK (*following her*). O it isn't your fault, Mrs. Weeden.

MRS. W. Yes—yes—I am responsible for my family. (*SUKE rises suddenly.*)

JACK. Nonsense. How could you—(*suddenly sees SUKE*)—well, what's the use? I'll—I'll—go now. (*Walks R., thrusting glove slyly in pocket. At entrance turns.*) I thought maybe I could—but no—I don't want to see her—ever, ever again! (*Exits R.*)

SUKE. Is yo' done gwine—

MRS. W. O don't bother me, Suke—don't ask me anything. I am just utterly discouraged—disheartened. (*Sinks in lounge in despair.*)

SUKE. O sho' now, honey, yo' done mustn't—

CALEB (*sticks head in at L.*). Mother Weeden!

MRS. W. (*jumping up in half alarm*). Yes, Caleb.

Enter CALEB, L.

CALEB (*advancing into room and looking around*). Why—ain't Olive here?

MRS. W. No.

CALEB. She ain't? (*Speaks with slow drawl.*)

MRS. W. No.

CALEB. Why, she said she was coming over here to spend the rest of the day. I laid down to take a nap—not having much of anything to do today, and not feeling like doing what little there was, and—

MRS. W. Cale Mead, you're lazy!

CALEB. Lazy? (*Begins to whittle a stick, letting shavings fall on floor.*)

MRS. W. Yes, lazy—l-a-z-y! As much as there is around your place that needs doing, for you to be lying around snoozing in the middle of the day—you, a big, able-bodied, healthy man—it puts me all out of patience with you. (*Turns back, stands with hands on hips, looking around.*)

CALEB (*still whittling listlessly*). Well, maybe I be—maybe I be. Don't you know, Mother Weeden, I shouldn't wonder a bit if I be. But when a fellow's wife puts every cent on her back, or into her mouth, that he can manage to scrape together, and even runs into debt—why, it ain't apt to make him so all-fired ambitious to scrape up any more, and—

MRS. W. (*turning back to him*). I know it, Cale—mercy on me! Do stop whittling that wood all over my floor! It's hard enough to get clean now without any more children's litter to clean up! (*He puts knife in pocket, throwing stick on floor.*) Olive is careless, I know—if she is my oldest daughter.

CALEB. Well, whose fault is it? Who brung her up?

MRS. W. I know! I know! I am responsible for my family. But I don't see that families necessarily include sons-in-law, and beaux, and chums, and all the visitors that are likely to drop in. I can't be responsible for them all! And it seems to me—(*doorbell rings*). O dear, dear, dear, dear! Who can that be? Suke, the bell.

SUKE. Yes'm. (*Exits R.*)

CALEB. You don't seem specially rigged up for company, Mother Weeden.

MRS. W. I know. I know. (*Excitedly tries to fix hair, pin collar, pick up things, etc.*)

CALEB (*shambles slowly left*). Well, I'm off. (*At L. entrance turns back.*) Sorry I'm so no 'count, Mother Weeden, but I guess I must have been cut from a spoiled pattern. (*Exits L.*)

Enter SUKE, R., followed by MRS. PARKER and PROFES-

SOR BABA MAJARAJAH. SUKE *keeps looking at PROFESSOR MAJARAJAH, looking frightened.*

SUKE (*just inside door*). Mrs. Parker, Mum, and a—a—a—gentleman! (*Walks C. as if frightened, then turns back to look at him, and speaks aside.*) Massy on us! I done wondah what kind of a fweak he done am! (*Exits C.*)

MRS. W. I'm glad you came in, Gertrude. But—but—but—(*with uneasy glance at room.*)

MRS. PARKER. I knew you wouldn't be expecting anyone to drop in on you at this hour in the morning, Nettie, but I did so want you to meet the Professor—Professor Baba Majarajah—my very dear friend, Mrs. Weeden.

PROF. B. M. (*shaking hands*). Very glad, indeed, I am to meet Madame. Very happy to look into her eyes, so blue like the far-away skies of India, and to press in mine so fair and soft her hand.

MRS. W. (*ill at ease*). 'You are very kind, I am sure, Professor—Professor—Professor—'

MRS. P. Majarajah, Nettie.

MRS. W. (*slowly and carefully*). Ma-ja-ra-jah.

PROF. B. M. Ah, so sweet it sounds—so soft—so musical—coming from the lips of the American Madame, so red like the sweet rose. (*Fingers red rose in his sash and bows low.*)

MRS. W. (*very much embarrassed, scurrying around to find seats*). Do have some chairs, please—sit here, Professor—here, Gertrude. I have been trying to get this room cleaned up, and straightened out, before time for luncheon, but—but—O dear, dear, dear, dear! (*Looks helplessly around.*)

PROF. B. M. (*seating himself*). The American Madame is—what shall I say?—flustrated—is that the word?

MRS. P. Quite expressive, at least, Professor. Don't look so worried, Nettie. We won't stay but just a few minutes, but the Professor came to call on me, and I just had to bring him right over to meet you.

MRS. W. (*looking from one to the other, puzzled*). Y-e-s?

(Sits and folds hands with air of resignation to whatever may be about to come next.)

MRS. P. You see, Nettie, dear, he is going to give a course of lectures—

MRS. W. (*half incredulously looking at him*). Lectures? (*He bows low.*) Where?

MRS. P. At the Auditorium.

MRS. W. When?

MRS. P. Beginning tonight. For the Modern Science Club. I'm secretary.

MRS. W. About—? (*Looking from one to the other.*)

MRS. P. (*enthusiastically*). O they are going to be just perfectly lovely, you know, Nettie—all about practical psychology.

MRS. W. (*astounded*). Psychology?

MRS. P. Yes, mental science, you know—New Thought—and—and—O he's so splendid when he talks about the subconscious mind, and all that.

MRS. W. (*still mystified*). The subconscious mind? Why, what—(*looks at PROF. B. M. as at some unsolved problem.*)

MRS. P. Yes, isn't it too delicious? You see, Nettie, it's like this. The subconscious mind is the part of the mind that you dream with—and you have no sort of control over it at all in ordinary ways.

MRS. W. Then what earthly good is it?

PROF. B. M. (*with elaborate, expansive gesture*). Why, you just have to influence it, Madame—and then it will do whatever you command of it.

MRS. W. Influence?

PROF. B. M. (*same gesture*). Exactly.

MRS. W. But how?

PROF. B. M. Why, Madame, everything you do and say—every thought you may think, even to yourself, has its influence upon this so wonderful part of your mind. Whatever you want to be, think you *are*—and you will soon become. Whatever you want to do, think you *can* and you *will*, and you cannot fail, however impossible it seems. Whatever you want to have, impress the subconscious mind with

the thought that it is yours *already*, and make yourself believe it, and you will surely draw it to you. O Madame, if you will only begin to instruct that little servant of yours properly, it will make your whole life different.

MRS. W. Make my whole life different? Love save my soul! If it only would! Heaven knows there's need enough of it! I'd do anything—try everything, that I really thought would make my whole life different. But—(*hesitates, puzzled, turns to* MRS. P.) Gertrude, do you understand?

MRS. P. (*a little dubiously*). Why, I think so. It seems quite simple.

MRS. W. Simple?

MRS. P. For instance, you think of the thing you want most of anything in all the world—to be, or do, or have, or happen, you know—and then you just keep wanting it as hard as you can, telling your subconscious mind all the time that it is yours, that it is true, and—and—well, it comes to pass sooner than you think, and you just can't help getting it all your way, for the subconscious mind has all the power over you, and your life and conditions, you see, and—and—am I telling it right, Professor?

PROF. B. M. O so beautifully, Madame—so sweetly. I am quite—what you say?—entranced.

MRS. W. (*clasping hands in ecstasy*). O I wonder! I wonder!

PROF. B. M. And what is it that the fair American Madame wonders?

MRS. W. Are you sure everybody has got one?

PROF. B. M. Why, that is, of course. It is the sole directing force of your whole life—outside and inside.

MRS. W. (*to* MRS. P.). Do you think there is really anything to it?

PROF. B. M. (*rising impetuously*). Anything to it! Why, Madame, there is all things to it—everything! (*Stands before her, speaking emphatically with many gestures.*) The great men of India have known it and practiced it for many centuries. The great men of England, and France, and Germany, and, yes, even your America, are now learning what a sure and wonderful thing it is!

MRS. W. (*rising and speaking with a note of apology in her voice*). But sit down, Professor, and tell me—

PROF. B. M. (*still with slight haughtiness*). It is to me sorry, Madame—very to be regrets—but—(*turns to R. and motions to door*). I must away! (*Spreads hands in elaborate gesture.*) To see many, many peoples, to do many, many duties! Ah, many, many!

MRS. W. (*to MRS. P., who has not risen*). You will stay, Gertrude?

PROF. B. M. You have, you think, no further duties in the town to go about, Madame, the secretary? (*To MRS. P.*) You with your friend will remain, and say to her the great truth? I alone will go on my way my appointed task to perform. So?

MRS. P. (*rising slowly*). If you are willing, Professor.

PROF. B. M. O very willing am I. Yes, Madame. Speak to me the—the—good-by—is that what you say? And—I—I—

MRS. P. (*extending hand to him*). And you will come back to luncheon with me, Professor?

PROF. B. M. (*bowing low over her hand*). I shall—O so much!—be delight in it, Madame!

MRS. W. And you will come to see me again, Professor; sometime when my house—my house—(*looks around, shaking head*).

PROF. B. M. I shall also so very much pleasure take, Madame of the blue, blue eyes. And you will to the lecture—

MRS. W. O yes, yes! If I can only get my work done. I always go to the Modern Science Club lectures. Don't I, Gertrude? When I can get my work done.

PROF. B. M. Ah, Madame, you must instruct—you must educate—you must teach and train that subconscious mind. Then all things will be just so like you *will* them to be—as you see it in your imagination. Everything in your whole life, Madame, depends upon the mental attitude that you yourself create. Whatever you steadfastly desire and *will* to come to you, why it simply has to come! It can't help coming! That is the one great law of the one true philos-

ophy. Ah, yes, yes! It is wonderful! We can be what we will be! Do you not read your Bible, Madame?

MRS. W. Bible? Why, certainly—certainly—when I have time.

PROF. B. M. And does it not say, "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he?"

MRS. W. Why, yes, so it does! so it does!

PROF. B. M. And now, ladies, I—I— to you must say the—the—the—morning is good. (*Bows himself out R.*)

MRS. W. AND MRS. P. (*together*). Good morning. (*Bow to him at the same time, then turning to face one another simultaneously, speak at once impulsively*). Isn't it perfectly wonderful?

MRS. W. (*dubiously*). If it is only true!

MRS. P. Why, of course it is true! The very idea!

MRS. W. But, Gertrude—

MRS. P. Well?

MRS. W. How do you *know*?

MRS. P. Why, all the magazines and newspapers are taking it up, and there's no end of books written about it. I've read a whole lot on the subject lately, haven't you? (*Looks around for books, moves chair to sit and cushion falls to floor.*)

MRS. W. (*picking it up and pounding it vigorously*). Love save my soul! I don't get any time to read. It's just work, work, work—worry, worry, worry, from morning till night!

MRS. P. Worry? O you mustn't worry. (*Goes to sit in another chair, finds it piled full of rugs. Jumps up, looks at chair, frightened, then looks helplessly around for another, keeping up the conversation all the time.*) That makes everything just that much worse—to worry about it. Worry, the Professor says, is just Fear, and Fear is the very worst thing you can feed to your subconscious mind, for it calls down the very worst things on your head that you can possibly imagine. You see, Nettie, the law works both ways. Think good, you get good. Think bad, why, of course, you get bad. Don't you see? (*Still looking around for chair, MRS. W. keeping busily at work.*)

MRS. W. Sit here, Gertrude. (*Dumping rugs on floor and dusting chair with apron.*) You don't mind my keeping at work, do you?

MRS. P. (*seating herself*). O certainly not. Go right ahead, the same as if I wasn't here.

MRS. W. I just want to get things in some kind of order before the family gets home for luncheon.

MRS. P. As I was saying, you musn't worry. Just fix your mind steadfastly upon whatever you most desire, and then believe it is true with all your heart.

MRS. W. (*stopping work and standing with hands on hips*). But how in mercy's name can I make myself believe a thing is true, when the good Lord himself knows it ain't true?

MRS. P. O it's just the old baby game of "Let's Pretend," only you just keep believing, and actually expecting it to come true all the time.

MRS. W. It's just like a fairy tale, isn't it?

MRS. P. Better. For it really does come true, you see.

MRS. W. Have you tried it?

MRS. P. Well—er—yes—but only in one or two little things so far, but—

MRS. W. Did it work?

MRS. P. Splendidly!

MRS. W. (*after a reflective pause*). I've just got a good notion—

MRS. P. (*eagerly*). Yes?

MRS. W. To try it on this family of mine.

MRS. P. (*inquiringly*). Yes?

MRS. W. If others can, I can.

MRS. P. (*encouragingly*). Yes! (*With emphatic nod.*)

MRS. W. I used to have a will of my own.

MRS. P. (*reminiscently nodding*). Yes!

MRS. W. Now everybody seems to own it but me.

MRS. P. (*in sympathetic inquiry*). Yes?

MRS. W. But if it is really true, that "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he—"

MRS. P. (*eagerly*). Yes?

MRS. W. It must mean "As a woman thinketh," too, and—

MRS. P. (*more eagerly*). Yes?

MRS. W. (*emphatically, pounds table loudly*). I'll do it!

MRS. P. (*with open delight*). Yes!

MRS. W. Love save my soul, Gertrude, can't you say anything but "Yes?"

MRS. P. (*surprised*). Yes! (*Opens mouth to continue, MRS. W. interrupts, not giving her a chance to say another word.*)

MRS. W. (*sits and meditates aloud*). Now, let me see. What do I want most of all? I know! One of the things I have always most ardently, passionately desired, is a clean, orderly house and a well-behaved family. You know, Gertrude, what a mess my house is always in. (MRS. P. *nods*.) But I don't believe you or anybody else can know how very, very much I have wanted, and always tried my best to have it different. Gertrude, you never saw such a careless family as mine in all this world. Mr. Weeden is actually the most thoughtless man who was ever created. Why, I've seen him, time and again, take off his shoes here in the parlor, after walking through the sand and gravel all day, and actually empty them right out on the carpet! He reads his newspaper and throws it down, piece by piece, as fast as he finishes a section. He takes off his duds and throws them down wherever he happens to be. And, mind you, every single one of the children is just exactly like him, and no amount of talking and scolding will do a mite of good! Then—well, you've seen something of Charles William's temper, Gertrude—

MRS. P. (*nodding*). Should say so.

MRS. W. And what does that blessed man do, but fly into a rage every day of his life, because the house is out of order!

MRS. P. That's the man of it.

MRS. W. Anyway, it's the Charles William of it.

MRS. P. Can't you break him?

MRS. W. Never could. He always growled that it was

his own house, and he guessed he could do as he pleased in it.

MRS. P. Humph! I'd fix him.

MRS. W. (*significantly*). I will! (*After a pause, emphatically.*) I can and I will! (*Sighs.*) But that isn't all. Beth's shook Jack Philley and is cutting up with a tough down town. Will's smoking cigarettes, Dolly's using slang and chewing gum. Jotham, the man, is a dummy—a regular simpleton, and Suke—well, I've told you before what a taste she has for annexing other people's property, and threats nor coaxing seem to have any effect at all on her unregenerate soul! Now I'm going to work in earnest to practice on this whole bunch—excuse the slang, Gertrude—I'm catching it of Dolly, I'm afraid—and see what I can make of the family—by way of the—what does he call it, the subconscious mind—is that right?

MRS. P. It seems rather—rather—an undertaking.

MRS. W. Of course it is. Just think how many subconscious minds I've got to influence! But it's worth trying, if it will make my life any different.

MRS. P. Of course it's worth trying, but—(*shakes head dubiously*).

MRS. W. Besides, Gertrude, the preacher and his good wife told me only this morning that I was responsible for my family—for all that they did and said. Think of it! If I am responsible, isn't it my duty to exercise my influence?

MRS. P. Yes, it looks that way, but—(*still very doubtful*).

MRS. W. Of course I'm beginning all wrong to tell you this, Gertrude, I see that. So right here and now, I want to take back every single word of it, and I want you to forget that I ever said it. (*Rises.*) Mrs. Gertrude Parker, listen to me! (*Grabs dustcloth or handkerchief or apron from floor and mounts barrel.*) I want you to distinctly understand from now on, henceforth and forever, that all I have been saying to you this morning has been but a dream—a fleeting vision—a nightmare. Bear it constantly in mind, Madam, that I have the cleanest, most orderly house in the whole county! Do not allow yourself

to forget, either, that my family is the neatest, most particular family in town. Understand?

MRS. P. (*looks around room dubiously, nods uncertainly*). I—guess—so.

MRS. W. Furthermore, Madam, you must thoroughly understand, once and for all, that my husband has the most angelic temper that was ever bestowed upon mortal man! That Beth, my ever wise and sensible daughter, would never dream of being even civil to any young man not of the most irreproachable character. That Will would never be tempted by any manner of means to even look at a cigarette. That Dolly is very choice in her language and would scorn to chew gum. That Olive, my good, wise, economical eldest daughter, is married to one of the most industrious men you ever saw! Got that?

MRS. P. Yes.

MRS. W. As to our servants, they are perfection! Jotham is so wise and efficient; Suke so honest and truthful! I am certainly blessed in my charming home, my adorable family and my wonderful servants! (*Descends from barrel after low bow and wave of cloth.*)

MRS. P. (*amazed at this change in her friend*). Nettie!

MRS. W. (*on floor, speaks firmly*). Yes, Gertie dear, it's all true. And, by the way, if you're sure it won't hurt your conscience too much, you might spread the news over town. I should so like all my friends to know what a dear, desirable family and home I have. Tell everybody you see, won't you? You see, when one has so many to influence—so many subconscious minds to instruct—she needs all the help of that kind she can get hold of, and—

MRS. P. I see, Nettie, and I'll stand by you. (*Rises.*) I must go now. I just must. I hope you'll succeed. As you say, it's a big undertaking; but it's worth it. And if you should happen to succeed—

MRS. W. Happen? Should? Why, Gertrude, I must! I am responsible for my family.

MRS. P. And you'll come tonight? To the lecture, you know?

MRS. W. (*firmly*). I'll come tonight.

MRS. P. Good! I'll expect you. And you'll learn so much more than I can tell you about the way to go to work. The Professor is fine when he gets started. He doesn't handle the language any too well in conversation, but he has his lecture at his tongue's end, and he's simply wonderful when he gets warmed up. (*Starts out, turns back at door.*) Now, Nettie, don't work too hard, don't worry, don't expect anything but the very best, get the subconscious mind into working order, and then, presto chango! (*Waves hand suggestively.*) All your troubles will disappear as if by magic. Good-bye. (*Starts out R.*)

Enter WILL, R, brushes roughly past her, throws cap on floor, jacket across lounge, book on chair.

WILL. Hello, Mamma!

MRS. W. Good morning, my son. Did you forget to speak to Mrs. Parker?

WILL (*looking around, drawls out*). Good morning, Mrs. Parker.

MRS. P. Good morning, Will.

WILL (*starts C.*). Lunch ready, Mamma?

MRS. W. (*dreamily absorbed in thought*). I presume so. I don't know.

WILL (*turning back in amazement*). Don't know?

MRS. W. William!

WILL. What?

MRS. W. Do I smell smoke—cigarette smoke?

Enter DOLLY, R.

WILL. I don't know.

MRS. W. Don't know?

WILL. Somebody may be passing with a cigar. How can I tell?

DOLLY (*delighted at the revelation*). O Will! (*Points finger at him.*)

WILL. Well, they may. What's eating you?

DOLLY (*in high glee*). What's that you've got behind you? (*Goes to him and forcibly pulls hand out with cigarette in it.*)

WILL. Stop! Go away from me! Mind your own business!

MRS. W. What? A cigarette? In my house? O Will!

MRS. P. Boys will be boys, Nettie. I wouldn't be too severe with him.

DOLLY. O, but, Mrs. Parker, he's just a blooming tough! A holy terror! If Dad could only once get his peepers glued on him, it's a cinch he wouldn't do a thing to him. O no! It's just a mistake! (*Laughs tauntingly.*)

MRS. W. Dolly! Dolly!

DOLLY. Well, it's all straight goods, Mamma. I ain't stretching the rubber a bit.

MRS. W. It has always been such a comfort to me, Gertrude, that Dolly was so very choice in her language, so very refined in her expressions.

MRS. P. It must be, Nettie. So many girls nowadays use such dreadful slang. (*DOLLY stares from one to the other dumbfounded.*)

MRS. W. Yes. I don't know what I would do if my little girl should get any such habit.

DOLLY (*to WILL, aside*). Gee, kid, get next to that! Is she bug-house?

WILL (*giggles*). Better come along, Dolly, and look for something to chew on. You may get some o' your nouns mixed up with your adjectives if you hang around in here.

DOLLY. Me for the grub, then. (*Puts hands on WILL's shoulders and marches him out C.*) On, brother, on!

MRS. W. You see, Gertrude—you see—

MRS. P. I see. I've always been a little sorry that I had only one child, but now—

MRS. W. It's certainly disheartening. It's—

Enter MR. W., R, with packages.

MR. W. Lunch ready, Nettie? (*The ladies turn to greet him.*) How do you do, Mrs. Parker? (*They shake hands.*)

MRS. P. I was just going, Mr. Weeden.

MR. W. Better stay to lunch. (*Turns to find place to lay packages.*)

MRS. W. Yes, won't you stay to lunch, Gertrude?

MRS. P. Really, can't, you know. You forget. (*Raises eyebrows significantly.*)

MRS. W. O yes; I remember. Well, I'll see you tonight.

MRS. P. Till tonight, then, then—(*holds out hand*).

MRS. W. (*taking hand*). Good-bye.

MRS. P. And courage. (*Exits R.*)

MR. W. Where the dickens is a fellow going to set these—

MRS. W. Better take them out in the dining-room, Charles William.

MR. W. Dining-room? (*She nods.*) But they are all—

MRS. W. Never mind. There'll be plenty of room there. I feel sure there can't be anything left in any other part of the house.

MR. W. Humph! (*Looks around.*) But why isn't this—why haven't you—

MRS. W. I've had company all the morning, and—

MR. W. (*again looking around*). Company! Good Lord! Here?

MRS. W. Yes—company here. And I couldn't—

WILL (*off C.*) Dinner!

MRS. W. Hurry on out to lunch, Charles William. Don't keep the children waiting. I'll come as soon as I can get my cap and apron off and get myself a little cleaned up. I look like a—

MR. W. (*scornfully*). Irish Bridget!

MRS. W. Well, maybe, but—

MR. W. When I married you, you were not—

MRS. W. The mother of four children.

WILL (*off C.*). Luncheon! Last call! Everybody out!

MRS. W. Do hurry, Charles William. The children have to get back to school and Suke's waiting to get back to her work.

MR. W. Well, how long till you—

MRS. W. Never mind me. I'll be ready in a minute.

MR. W. It certainly does beat the devil how a woman can putter, putter, putter away a whole half day, and then—(*exits C., still grumbling.*)

MRS. W. And this is the way it goes. (*Removes apron,*

cap, etc., while speaking. Pins collar, arranges hair and tries to make herself more presentable.) Talk about the subconscious mind! If I have one it must be a regular lunatic asylum of conflicting ideas. But what was it that Rev. and Mrs. Dunning said? I am responsible for my family. I am responsible for my family! Cuts deep, all right. I am responsible for whatever they are, and whatever they say or do—maybe think, for all I know. Everybody says it's all my fault, no matter what happens to anyone of them. Well, maybe it has been—maybe it has. Anyway, from this on I'll give 'em all a good big dose of subconscious mind—administered at all hours of day and night, and see how they swallow it, and what effect it has.

ALL (*off C.*). Mother! Mother!

MR. W. (*stands in curtains, C.*). Hurry, Nettie. (*Looks very impatient.*)

MRS. W. Yes, yes; I'm coming. (*Starts C.*)

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

SCENE: *Breakfast-room. Table laid for breakfast, six places, with chairs in position. Fireplace with mantel at back. Lounge across R. Archway at L., with curtains, leading into sitting-room. Door at L. back leads to dining-room proper or kitchen. Door down R. leads to hallway. Near L. front stands a broken chair so arranged that the break is not noticeable. See Scene Plot for stage setting.*

As curtain rises, SUKE is discovered placing dishes on table. She passes back and forth throughout the first half of scene, carrying dishes, etc. During breakfast she stands back of MRS. W., passing dishes, etc., throughout meal. Curtain rises, also disclosing JOTHAM, standing in front of table, twisting hat and looking stupidly around room.

JOTHAM (*after a pause*). Missus said—she said—I'm sure she said—

SUKE (*pausing with dish in hand, surveying him scornfully*). Y-a-a-a-s! (*He looks at her helplessly. Seeing he is not going to speak again, she places dish on table and turns back to the kitchen. At door she looks back over shoulder, with derisive smile.*) Humph! (*Exits.*)

JOTHAM (*scratches head and looks all around*). Blamed if I can see—(*looks from one chair to another.*) Doggone it! (*Begins to examine the chairs about table uncertainly.*) This chair looks all right. (*Goes to another.*) And there sartin' ain't nothin' at all wrong with this one. (*Sits in it, twirling it back and forth and swaying it from side to side in evident enjoyment.*) Mighty comforting chair, this here is. (*Goes to broken chair and surveys it from a short distance, with hand on chin.*) Now, what can be out of whack with that one? Looks just like the rest? (*Sits, chair collapses and JOTHAM sprawls on floor with a yell of pain.*) Holy smoke! (*After a pause, while he rubs himself all over, with wry face, he sits up on floor and looks at the remains of the chair.*) Gee whiz! There must o' been something wrong with that one somewhar! (*Rises, feeling for broken bones and rubbing head.*) It went to pieces all on a sudden like—it did, for a fac'!

Enter SUKE from kitchen.

SUKE (*with more dishes*). He, he, he! What am de mattah wid yo', Jotham?

JOTHAM. Why—you see, Suke—dat chair.

SUKE. Yaas, I done sees—dat chair. (*Laughs again.*) It wasn't so mighty comf'able, eh? (*Laughs and exits kitchen.*)

JOTHAM. Waal, now, laugh if you see the joke. I don't. (*Picks up pieces cautiously as though afraid they would explode.*) Missus said—she said—to—to fix it. Yes, she surely did say just that—to fix it. But how's a fellow going to do it? That's what I want to know. Where's he going to commence? And what's he going to do it with? (*Sighs deeply.*) It's more'n I can figger out. (*Stands holding pieces, looking at them in bewilderment.*)

Enter SUKE from kitchen.

SUKE (*with dishes*). Ain't yo' done got dat ar cheer o' Missus' fixticated yet, Jotham? Lawd o' massy, but yo' sartin' am a right slow one.

JOTHAM (*looking at her savagely*). Slow?

SUKE. Slowerin 'a niggah funeral, Jotham. Yo' am fo' a fac'. (*Laughs teasingly.*) Yo' done ain't so slow when it comes to takin' a fall outen yo'self—but yo' am mighty slow a-gittin' obah it. (*At table.*)

JOTHAM (*angrily*). Now, you just look here, Suke. I ain't a goin' to—

SUKE (*looks up innocently*). Youse done ain't gwine ter fix dat are cheer fo' Missus? O sho' now! Missus sartin' done specs yo' to do dat.

JOTHAM. Maybe you'd like to do it yourself. You think you know so doggoned much about it.

SUKE (*hands on hips, surveys him haughtily*). Who? Me? Fix dat cheer, yo' says? I gibbs you to undahstan', sah, dat I'se de cook lady.

JOTHAM. Humph! Lucky for you. (*Turns back to the broken chair and bends over, trying to put them together in some kind of shape.*)

SUKE (*at table, aside*). Dat ar spoon am a mighty pretty pattern. (*Picks up spoon and turns it over in her hands, admiring it.*) Jes' de berry t'ing fo' dis chile to hab some day when she done want to set up de housekeep fo' he'self, an' some peart yaller boy. (*Looks all around apprehensively, then at JOTHAM, watching him cautiously as she slips spoon into the pocket of her apron. Then starts for kitchen.*) Bettah done git busy, Jotham. I ain't 'spectin' dem ar pieces done gwine put deirselves back togeddah all ob deir own accord. No, sah. (*Looks back over shoulder again at entrance, with taunting laugh.*)

JOTHAM. No. Consarn it all. They don't seem to have no idee of cutting up no sech capers. (*Standing back, scratching head, surveys them as some problem impossible to solve.*)

Enter MRS. WEEDEN, L.

MRS. W. Good morning, Jotham. (*He nods awkwardly.*) Isn't this a fine morning? (*Looks around.*) And how nice

the house looks. It is so nice to have everything so straight and orderly so early in the morning. And that chair. I felt so bad when it broke; but then, I soon thought to myself, "Now, what do I care? There's Jotham right at hand, and he is so bright and smart he always knows just what to do with everything, and he'll be able to fix it up again in no time."

JOTHAM (*looks first at her and then at the chair, scratches head and speaks dubiously*). Yes'm.

MRS. W. It's such a blessing, Jotham, to have a fellow like you around.

JOTHAM (*nods with silly smile*). Yes'm.

MRS. W. Now, some boys—some men—wouldn't have the least idea what to do with that chair. But you, Jotham, have such a fine mind—you think so fast—you always know what to do with everything, and—

Enter SUKE from kitchen.

MRS. W. (*turns to greet her*). Good morning, Suke.

SUKE. Mawning, Missus. (*Goes to table, MRS. W. joins her.*)

MRS. W. I was just telling Jotham how nice the room looked this morning.

SUKE. Yes'm. (*Nods to pile of coats, caps, aprons, toys, etc., on lounge.*) I didn't get time to clar dat are lounge, Mum, but I done got ebryt'ing—

MRS. W. (*ignoring the lounge and apparently not hearing*). How good it is to think that there is never anything out of place in this house.

SUKE (*uncertainly*). Yas'm.

MRS. W. It is such a comfort to realize that everybody in the whole family is so careful to have "a place for everything and everything in its place." (*While saying this, gathers things from lounge and carries them out R. door, returning immediately, SUKE watching her with wide open eyes.*) Don't you think so, Suke?

SUKE (*staring at her wonderingly*). Yas'm.

MRS. W. (*walks to table, surveying it critically*). And how nicely the table looks. You have the silver shining so

nicely. It is such a joy, Suke, to have a good cook who can be trusted to handle all these nice expensive things.

SUKE (*looks down at pocket apprehensively, speaks in troubled tone*). Yas'm.

MRS. W. Some girls, you know, who like pretty things as well as you do, might almost be tempted to steal now and then a piece of silver, or—

SUKE (*trembling*). Yas'm.

MRS. W. Of course, Suke, I know that you, who are so honest and truthful, can hardly understand how any girl could even want to take a thing—even a pin, that did not belong to her, but still they tell me there are girls—(*pauses, shakes head and sighs*).

SUKE (*looking around as for means of escape*). Yas'm.

MRS. W. But I have always been so thankful that you were not at all that kind—that you were so strictly honest and truthful—

SUKE (*her agitation increasing*). Yas'm.

MRS. W. And that I need never be the least bit afraid that you would even think of touching the least thing that didn't rightfully belong to you—

SUKE (*almost frenzied*). Yas'm.

MRS. W. (*looking around room again*). Well, now that things are moving along so nicely here, I'll go on into the sitting-room and see if there are any finishing touches needed there. (*Pauses by JOTHAM.*) That's right, Jotham. I am sure you will make my poor old chair look as good as new. You have such a fine mind—you are so bright and so smart. (*Smiles at him encouragingly and exits L., JOTHAM staring at her.*)

SUKE (*rolling eyes in fear*). What have come obah Missus dis heah mawning? 'Spects dis heah chile done bet-tah put dat ar spoon back whar she done fin' it. (*Replaces spoon, goes out kitchen door, casting many apprehensive glances toward sitting-room.*)

JOTHAM (*has been bending over pieces, aimlessly attempting to put them in shape, now stands up and scratches head, looking dumbfounded*). I have such a fine mind—am so bright, so smart. Gee! (*Finally gathers up pieces*

in his arms.) Come on, you pieces. Come on, old chair. Didn't you hear Missus tellin' how smart I am? Just you come with me. I'll fix you. You bet! (*Goes up toward kitchen door, continually dropping pieces and having to stop to pick them up. Speaks to self.*) I have such a fine mind—I am so bright—so smart—so bright,—so smart—a fine mind. (*Disappears into kitchen, repeating the words to himself as if fascinated by the sound.*)

Enter SUKE from kitchen, MRS. W. from L.

MRS. W. Suke, if any young man calls today and asks for Miss Beth, will you please remember to tell him that she is engaged and cannot see him?

SUKE. Yas'm. Engaged. Cannot see him. Yas'm. I'se done recomember.

MRS. W. You won't forget?

SUKE. Suah, Mum, dis chile done won't forget. (*Exits kitchen.*)

Enter WILL, R., with a clatter.

WILL. Whoopee! All hands for breakfast! Why, hello, Mamma! (*Throws coat and cap, books, etc., on lounge.*)

MRS. W. Good morning, my son.

WILL. Dolly up yet?

MRS. W. I don't think she has come down stairs yet, Will. How neat and tidy you look this morning. (*WILL gives several surreptitious pats to his hair and brushes his suit slyly.*) And how nice it is of you not to throw your things around in the disorderly way some boys of your age have of doing. I want you to know, Will, how deeply your mother appreciates your neat, orderly habits. (*Exits L., smiling on him sweetly.*)

WILL (*picks up cap, jacket, ball bat, ball, books, etc., from lounge*). Now what in the world can Mamma mean by all that gush? Me! Keep things in their places? Neat, orderly ways? Gee whiz! (*Exits R., with things.*)

DOLLY (*off R. as though from upstairs*). Is that you, Will?

WILL (*off R.*). Sure thing!

DOLLY. What are you doing out in the hall?

WILL. Hanging up my things.

DOLLY. Great guns! You don't say! Ain't sick, are you?

WILL. Cheese it, Dolly. Coming down?

DOLLY. Soon's as I can find my hair ribbon, and handkerchief, and a hundred or so little things like that. Breakfast ready?

WILL. Of course. Get a move on yourself.

Enter WILL, R.

WILL. Wonder if a fellow dare to light a coffin-nail in this room. (*Takes cigarette papers from pocket, looks at them, starts to extract one, then hears sound out R. Looks around apprehensively and hastily replaces them.*)

Enter DOLLY, R.

DOLLY. Gee, Will, you look guilty. (*Chews gum vigorously.*) What's the rip?

WILL. O nothing. (*Hands in pocket, whistles indifferently.*)

DOLLY. Quit yer bluffing, kid, and 'fess up.

WILL. O well, I just thought I heard the governor coming; that's all.

DOLLY. Nope. Nary a governor. Just me. (*Looking around room.*) Where in the dickens is my hair ribbon, anyway? I can't go to school like this.

WILL. Saw something that looked like a hair ribbon, or a shoe lace, or a—a—some kind of a string in that sitting-room cyclone yesterday. That sure was "a place for everything, with everything in that one place."

DOLLY (*goes to door L. and looks out*). Golly! 'Tain't there, now. Everything's as slick as grease and as straight as a ruler. That's something like other folkses homes, ain't it, kid? Somebody's been getting busy.

WILL (*hands still in pockets, indifferently*). O everybody works but father.

MRS. W. (*off L.*). Did you want something, Dolly?

DOLLY (*jumps back from door, startled*). Why, Mamma! I didn't know you were in there.

MRS. W. Lost anything?

DOLLY. Was only looking for my hair ribbon.

MRS. W. The red one?

DOLLY. Uh-huh!

MRS. W. (*very sweetly*). I put it in that nice plush box on your dresser, dear. I always say how nice it is that you always have such a tidy room, with all your things in such perfect order that you know just where to find them.

DOLLY. Humph! (*Turns back to WILL.*) Say, kid what's gone wrong with Mamma this morning? Jerusalem! But you ought to take a peep into my room! What's she driving at?

WILL. Search me. I thought she was making fun of me at first, but she smiled so sweetly, and looked so serious, and—and—downright earnest, you know, as if she believed what she said, that I—I don't know what to make of it.

DOLLY. She's got me, all right, all right. Well, I must go up and get my hair ribbon. (*Starts out R. with a bounce, knocks into MR. W., who is just entering with newspaper.*) Gee, dad! I didn't see you coming. (*Exits.*)

Enter MR. W., R.

MR. W. (*watching her angrily*). Well, what in the name of—

WILL (*giggles*). Earthquakes and cyclones, dad.

MR. W. (*turns back into room*). Should say so. Such actions in a girl of her age. That's the way your mother has brought her up—the worst rowdy of a girl I ever saw! And all your mother's fault—yes, it is! All your mother's fault! Where is your mother? (*Walking angrily about room.*)

WILL (*points L. door*). In there.

MR. W. Breakfast ready?

WILL. Hain't heard. (*Walks about nervously, hands in pockets.*)

MR. W. Humph! Seven o'clock and no breakfast yet! What kind of a house does that mother of yours pretend to keep, anyway? Have I always got to be an hour or two late at my business, just because I can't get anything to eat before the middle of the day? Great Cæsar! Was break-

fast ever ready in this house? No, of course not. That's your mother's way of running things. I'd just like a try at this house for awhile myself. Nothing to do but get three meals a day and keep a little house in order, and then a man can never get a bite to eat in time to get down town in the morning till the day's half gone. A man's a fool to get married! (*Sits lounge, reads paper.*)

Enter BETH, R.

BETH. Breakfast ready?

WILL. Search me. (*Still walking about.*)

MR. W. (*looking up sarcastically*). Breakfast ready? Humph! Did you ever know breakfast to be ready? Your mother's in there. (*Points L.*)

BETH (*to WILL*). What you doing?

WILL. Nothing.

BETH. What's wrong?

WILL. Nothing.

BETH. Humph!

Enter DOLLY, R.

DOLLY (*goes to BETH, speaks aside*). Seen Mamma this morning?

BETH. No. Why? (*DOLLY shakes head.*) Anything the matter?

DOLLY (*mysteriously, with glance toward L. door*). I ain't wise to nothing.

Enter SUKE, with tureen of baked potatoes.

SUKE. You-uns can come to yo' bweakfast now. It done am ready.

MR. W. (*lays down paper, sarcastically*). A wonder!

WILL (*calls*). Breakfast! Whoop-ee!

BETH AND DOLLY (*together*). Mamma!

Enter MRS. W., L.

MRS. W. All ready, children. Good morning, Beth. (*They take places at table, MRS. W. at L. end, MR. W. at R. end, BETH in middle chair at back of table, DOLLY on her R. and WILL on her L. SUKE stands back of MRS. W., waiting on table.*) Any news in the paper this morning, Charles William?

MR. W. Not as I can see. What time do I get to read the paper, when I can never get my breakfast till everybody else in town has gone to work? Hand it here, Suke. (*SUKE gets paper from lounge where he laid it and hands it to him. He reads, feeding himself with one hand.*)

MRS. W. (*pouring coffee and handing cups to SUKE, who passes them around.*) By the way, Beth dear, before I forget, I expect some ladies here for tea this afternoon, and I am going to send them up to your room to lay off their wraps.

BETH (*in dismayed protest*). O Mamma, it—

MRS. W. (*interrupting, as though not hearing*). Your room is always in such perfect order that it is a pleasure to me to ask my guests into it.

BETH. Why, Mamma Weeden, you know it is no such thing! Why, it's literally strewn from one end to the other with—

MRS. W. (*continues, still unheeding*). I was telling Mrs. Parker only yesterday what a comfort you had always been to me in your tidy habits and orderly ways.

BETH. O Mamma, please don't make—

MR. W. (*impatiently*). Nettie, what are you—(*looking over paper.*)

MRS. W. (*ignoring all interruptions*). And do you know, papa, that our dear daughter is going to sing in the choir?

MR. W. (*a little more pleasantly*). No. Is this true, Beth?

MRS. W. (*giving BETH no chance to answer*). Rev. and Mrs. Dunning called yesterday to make the arrangements.

MR. W. That's nice, I am sure, Beth.

MRS. W. Yes, I have always so appreciated Beth's eagerness to help in church work. So different from some young ladies of her age.

DOLLY (*leans across BETH, speaks to WILL*). Now, what do you know about that?

WILL (*same business*). It's a stunner, all right, all right.

MRS. W. (*looking archly at BETH*). Of course, Jack's being in the choir may have had some influence—

BETH (*distressed*). Mamma!

MRS. W. But that's another joy. Some girls are so prone to bad company. My Beth was never attracted by any but the very best—like dear Jack. (*Beams on BETH, who hangs head.*)

DOLLY. Suke!

SUKE. Yas'm.

DOLLY. Pass the spuds.

SUKE. Yas'm. (*Passes tureen.*)

MRS. W. (*complacently*). Indeed, I have so much to be thankful for. When I see some girls of Dolly's age, for instance, using such unrefined expressions—actually slang, some of them, mind you—and then remember what choice language my little Dolly always uses—

MR. W. (*lays down paper in exasperation*). For heaven's sake, Ida Jeanette Weeden, what in the dickens has got into you this morning? You seem possessed by the very spirit of evil—the father of lies and deceit! Can't you do anything but sit across there, grinning like a Chinese idol, and spring such dodgasted, infer—

MRS. W. (*smiling dreamily, her face as serene as ever*). And another great source of joy is my dear husband's un-failing good temper and his invariable sweet and amiable conversation. It is such a glorious inspiration to my daily life. No wonder the children are such models in every respect with such a father. (*Smiles lovingly across at him. He looks at her a moment in utter bewilderment, then resumes his paper with a grunt of disgust.*)

MR. W. (*reading*). I see another dealer has been convicted of selling cigarettes to boys under age.

MRS. W. Indeed! Isn't it splendid that *we* need never worry about our boy being tempted to indulge in so vile and demoralizing a habit?

MR. W. Yes, indeed. (*BETH nudges WILL, DOLLY looks across at him, he hangs head.*)

MRS. W. Anyway, it cannot possibly concern us. Our Will would never even think of them.

MR. W. (*looking at WILL sternly*). If I thought for a minute he ever would, I'd—I'd—I'd—why, I declare, I'd

break every single bone in his worthless body! (WILL trembles.)

MRS. W. (*in a voice of sincere admiration*). You were always such a kind, tender, indulgent father, Charles William.

OLIVE *entering R.*

OLIVE. At breakfast, folks?

MRS. W. Yes, Olive; come right in.

OLIVE. Indeed I will. Just ran in to see if I couldn't get a cup of coffee. Caleb isn't out of bed yet.

ALL (*except MRS. W.*) Now what do you think of that?

OLIVE. And I do get so hungry mornings waiting for my breakfast.

ALL (*except MRS. W.*) Should say so.

WILL (*jumping up, glad of a chance to escape*). Take my place, Olive. I'm just off to school.

DOLLY (*jumping up*). Here, too.

MRS. W. Bring another plate, Suke.

SUKE. Yas'm. (*Clears away WILL's dishes, replacing them with clean ones.*)

OLIVE. O but it's so nice to live so near mother that you can run in at any time and save yourself from utter starvation.

DOLLY AND WILL (*together*). Good-bye, all.

ALL. Good-bye.

DOLLY (*at door, aside to WILL*). Do you think Mamma's sick? What if our bad ways had driven her crazy?

WILL. 'Sh! Don't think of such things. (MRS. W. *pours coffee for OLIVE.*)

DOLLY. But, don't you know, people have lost their minds over just such little things. And we have been simply horrid in ever so many nasty ways, Will Weeden. You know we have. (*Looks back at MRS. W. anxiously.*)

WILL. Well, come on to school now and quit your croaking. That won't mend anything. (*Takes her arm and pulls her off R.*)

OLIVE. Got my dress, mother, and it's fine!

MRS. W. I am sure you were very wise and prudent in

your selection, my daughter. You always are. (*Smiling at her.*)

OLIVE (*defiantly*). It's pale blue silk.

MRS. W. I take such a great pride in your economy and good judgment, Olive.

OLIVE (*aghast*). Mine? (MRS. W. *nods, smiling proudly.*) O come now, mother, you know I—

MRS. W. Some women are so reckless and extravagant in their early married years that they rob their husbands of all interest in life and work and bring them at last into debt, and even to the meanest poverty. (OLIVE *hangs head, toying with fork.*) I have always rejoiced that there was none of that in your nature.

OLIVE. Mamma!

MRS. W. I feel sure Caleb will some day become a very wealthy man. With such an economical wife to help him save, how could he help it?

OLIVE. O please—

MR. W. (*looking up from paper again*). O cut that out, Nettie. You make me tired!

MRS. W. Of course; you inherit a great deal of that from the strong, well-balanced, well-controlled nature of your father. I have always been so proud of my dear husband. (*Beaming across at him.*)

MR. W. (*looking up from paper again*). I see by the paper that some fool Hindu or other is giving a series of lectures at the Auditorium this week on that nonsensical New Thought doctrine we read so much about lately.

BETH. What is New Thought, anyway?

OLIVE. O something to do with mental science, Christian science, suggestion, the new psychology, and all those things, isn't it, papa?

MR. W. Yes; all that rot! Plain foolology, I call it.

OLIVE. But it's becoming very popular, papa. They say it's spreading rapidly.

MR. W. O yes. There's plenty of empty heads in the world to take it all in.

OLIVE. I don't know a single thing about it, myself.

MR. W. All the better for you; such tom-fool dope as

it is. And for fully matured human beings to take up with, too, and swallow down, spoon and all, just as if they liked it. It puts a thinking man out of all patience with humanity. (*Rising, throws paper on floor.*)

MRS. W. (*rising*). Well, I must go to work. (*Sees paper on floor.*) It is so nice of you, Charles William, never to throw things around the house the way some men do.

MR. W. (*picks up paper impatiently*). In the name of Nebuchadnezzar, Nettie, do let up on that confounded jibberish of—

MRS. W. (*continuing as though he had not spoken*). It makes it so easy to keep a straight, orderly house, you know. (*Exits L.*)

BETH (*on Mr. W.'s right*). Papa, what ails her? (*Grasps his arm, leads him down front.*)

OLIVE (*on his left, grasping his left arm*). What has happened to her?

MR. W. Blamed if I know! It must be some dodgasted—

OLIVE. Can it be that the hard work—

BETH. And the worry—

OLIVE. The constant muss—

BETH. And fuss—

OLIVE (*anxiously looking at L.*). Have—have—

BETH (*in horrified tone*)—unsettled her—

MR. W. (*suddenly catching their thought*). Great heavens, girls, you don't mean she is crazy?

OLIVE. Something's wrong.

BETH. She's not a bit herself.

MR. W. Good Lord! Mad? Insane? My wife—Nettie?

BETH. I haven't heard her say, "O dear, dear, dear, dear!" a single time this morning.

OLIVE. No, nor that other favorite expression of hers, "Love save my soul!"

MR. W. She must be off—she must! (*Meditatively.*)

OLIVE. She has been smiling the same sugar-coated smile—

BETH. Yes, and going on in the same idiotic way ever since I came down stairs.

MR. W. I'll see Dr. Hume this very morning.

OLIVE AND BETH (*together*). Do.

OLIVE. But don't let her suspect—

BETH. Goodness, no!

Enter SUKE from kitchen, to clear table.

MR. W. (*turning to her, speaking mysteriously*). Suke!

SUKE. Yas'r.

MR. W. Has your mistress—(*pauses, with uneasy glance toward L. door.*)

SUKE. Fo' de Lawd, Massa, I t'ink she am done bewitched!

MR. W. }

BETH. } (*together, in alarm*). Bewitched!

OLIVE. }

SUKE (*rolling eyes*). She done go on so cwazy-like, sah! I'se done clean afeared ob her—I is! An' eben dat ar Jotham, he am skeered mighty nigh to deaff—an'—an'—

MR. W. (*glancing L. again uneasily*). That'll do, Suke. That's all I wanted to know. (*SUKE exits, kitchen, and he turns to girls again.*)

BETH. She's got me booked for that measly old choir—and I just can't bear to go.

MR. W. You can't. Why?

BETH (*hesitatingly*). Jack—

MR. W. What about Jack?

BETH. Why, he—he—he sings.

MR. W. (*puzzled*). Well?

BETH (*doesn't want her father to know truth*). O—I—I—(*looks for help toward OLIVE.*)

OLIVE (*breaking in hastily*). But about Mamma—what'll we do?

BETH. We just must do something at once.

MR. W. I'll bring Dr. Hume home with me to luncheon and have him size her up—quite on the sly, you know.

OLIVE. Yes, yes, and I'll run home and 'phone to Rev. Dunning. I think he'd better look in.

MR. W. (*nodding assent*). Yes.

OLIVE. And you, Beth—

MR. W. Must stay at home and watch her close.

BETH. Yes, yes.

MR. W. And let me know at once if there should be any new developments.

GIRLS. O dear! (*Looking at one another in despair.*)

MR. W. One never knows in such cases what may happen.

GIRLS (*as before*). O dear!

MR. W. Ain't it wisest to be on the safe side?

GIRLS. Yes, yes!

MR. W. I must hurry now. I want to see the doctor as soon as possible. (*Looks at watch and scowls at the hour.*)

OLIVE. And Caleb will surely be up by this time and be as hungry as a wolf. (*Starts R.*)

MR. W. Do your best, Beth. I leave her in your hands now. Be sure and 'phone me if anything happens. (*Turns R. with OLIVE.*) You see, Olive, it is this way. (*Exits R. with OLIVE, talking aside to her.*)

BETH (*tiptoes to door at L and looks in cautiously, then listens intently a minute*). "All's quiet along the Potomac," just now. (*Walks back to center front.*) Now I must go and dig, dig, dig at my horrid old room for the accommodation of those ladies who will expect to find it in such excellent order. Heavens! (*Exits R.*)

Enter SUKE from kitchen.

SUKE (*working at table*). Dat spoon sartin do look right tempting, it do for a fac'; but no, yo' onery little spoon, yo' needn't be a-winkin' at dis heah chile—nary a wink. Suke am honest an' troof-ful—yes, sah! She would not eben tech yo'! No, sah! (*Puts hands behind back and backs off toward kitchen door, eyes fixed on spoon with fascinated gaze. Just as she reaches entrance.*)

DOLLY *runs in R., wearing hat and jacket and carrying open purse in her hand. She is all out of breath, as though from rapid running.*

DOLLY. Suke! O Suke! (*Puts hand to side, panting.*)

SUKE (*jumps, startled out of her fixed gaze and looks*

badly frightened.) Yas—yas. Why, what am it, Miss Dolly? Yo' done skeered de life outen me!

DOLLY. Why, Suke—did you take—a dollar—out of my purse? It was lying—on my dresser—upstairs, you know—and the dollar was in it—last night—and now—when I went to buy a book—it was—gone!

SUKE (*rolling eyes*). Gone?

DOLLY. Yes, gone—see! (*Shows empty purse.*) Not a penny there.

MRS. W. (*comes to curtains at L. and listens to conversation, unperceived by others*). What is it, I wonder? (*Aside.*)

SUKE (*angrily*). Gone? And yo' done t'inks I tuk yo' old dollah, Miss Dolly? Me?

DOLLY. Why—er—you see, Suke, nobody else has gone in my room, and—

SUKE (*advancing in real anger, DOLLY stepping back at each step SUKE takes forward.*) Now look here, you kid! I ain't took yo' money! No, sah! I ain't seen yo' money, nohow! De onliest t'ing what I ebbah teches in yo' room is yo' gum!

DOLLY. My gum?

SUKE. Yas'm; yo' gum! An' aftah I chews it fo' awhile, I allus puts it right stwaight back whar I gets it from, too, and sticks it in de very same spot, I does, so whenever yo' done wants to chew it yo'self, yo' can fin' yo' cud right whar yo' done sticked it yo'self. See? (*Turns away in disgust.*)

MRS. W. *advancing into room from L.*

MRS. W. Why, whatever can you mean, Suke? You surely must be making a terrible mistake. You must know that my Dolly would never chew gum. Gum! Ugh! Most certainly not. Nothing would induce her to. (*DOLLY snatches gum from mouth and throws in fireplace.*)

SUKE (*glaring at DOLLY*). Humph!

MRS. W. But what are you home for, Dolly? You'll be late to school if you don't hurry.

SUKE. She done say I tuk her dollah, an'—

MRS. W. What? O Dolly! How unjust. When you know

how honest and truthful Suke has always been. Bless you, child, she wouldn't touch your money. You must have mislaid it somewhere yourself, dear. Suke would never have looked in your purse in the world. I know that. (*Beams on SUKE, who hangs head guiltily, while DOLLY stares at her mother.*)

DOLLY. I'm sorry, Suke—if—but you—(*stammeringly.*)

MRS. W. Run up to my room, dear, and get another dollar to pay for your book out of my purse, and tonight, when you have time, you can search for the one you have mislaid.

DOLLY (*going R.*). All right, Mamma. Thank you. But it's certainly mighty queer. (*At R. entrance looks back at SUKE, shakes head and exits. SUKE exits kitchen.*)

MRS. W. How beautifully it works already. What a wonderful thing that subconscious mind is. I'm so thankful I found out about it. (*Starts L.*)

BETH (*looking in R.*). Are you all right, Mamma?

MRS. W. (*turning in surprise*). All right? Why, of course! Why?

BETH (*confused*). O nothing. (*Withdraws.*)

MRS. W. (*goes to R. to door.*) Beth!

Enter SUKE from kitchen and sets table back out of way.

BETH (*off R.*). Yes?

MRS. W. Where are you going?

BETH. Back upstairs!

MRS. W. What are you doing?

BETH. Cleaning up my room! (*SUKE raises hands in horror and exits.*)

MRS. W. (*walks back toward center, smiling significantly to herself*). Cleaning up her room. (*Loud tramping out R.*) Who is coming down?

Enter CALEB, R., dragging feet noisily.

MRS. W. O Caleb! My dear son-in-law. I am so glad to see you so early in the morning.

CALEB (*amazed*). Early?

MRS. W. Yes, though I know, of course, that you must have been working for hours.

CALEB (*as before*). Hours!

MRS. W. Of course. Do sit down a minute. I want to talk to you.

CALEB (*sits lounge, lazily*). Talk?

MRS. W. (*sits chair*). Yes, I have wanted for a long time to be able to tell you how much I appreciate Olive's good fortune in getting such an industrious, ambitious and skillful husband to take care of her and bless her life.

CALEB (*surprised out of his laziness—jumps up*). What?

MRS. W. Sit down. (*He sits again, looking bewildered.*) Yes, I mean it. I have long wanted to be able to say this to you. A good husband is such a blessing, and you are making Olive so happy.

CALEB (*jumping up again*). Happy?

MRS. W. Yes, happy. Sit down, Caleb. (*He sits again.*) You must be tired, and this little rest will do you good. As I was saying, you are making Olive so happy. You have given her such a fine home, and you keep it so nice, and you provide for her so well.

CALEB (*jumping up again*). I?

MRS. W. (*rising and laying hand on his arm*). Yes, of course, my son, and I want you to know how much we all appreciate it. (*He turns in fright toward the door, seeking escape. She follows.*) You are a fine fellow, Caleb—a model husband. How fortunate my dear girl was to meet you.

CALEB (*at door*). Yes, yes.

MRS. W. (*hand on arm*). Don't hurry.

CALEB (*nervously*). I must! I have so much to do at home. No time to waste.

MRS. W. (*admiringly*). Always so busy! Such an industrious man! (*Exit CALEB. She walks back to center of room, thoughtfully.*) I am responsible for my family. Then, of course, it stands to reason that I must make out of my family something worth being responsible for. That's logic. Well, I'll go up to my room awhile now, I guess, and practice the concentration exercises that Professor Majarajah taught us how to do last night. (*Exits R.*)

Enter SUKE, from kitchen.

SUKE. It sartin am amazin' how Missus do keep a-goin' on. I'se mos' afeard to budge myself. (*Starts out L. door.*)

CHIP *enters R. cautiously, speaks loud whisper.*

CHIP. Hist! there! You black Topsy! Alone?

SUKE (*turns startled, then recovers and grows indignant*). Not so much 'lone dat I'se gwine be mashed on by any pore white trash, I can tol yo', sah!

CHIP (*laughs scornfully*). Mashed on? That's a good one on me. But say, look here. See this? (*Holds up dollar temptingly. SUKE grins and nods.*) Bet you do. Trust a nigger wench for that. Well, say—(*looks all around apprehensively*), is—is—is Beth home?

SUKE. Miss Beth? (*He nods impatiently.*) Suah, she am in, but she done am engaged.

CHIP. Engaged? Sure she is. Don't you s'pose I know that, you female coon? Why, she's engaged to me! (*Straightens up proudly and struts.*)

SUKE. You?

CHIP (*points self proudly*). Me! (*Bows low.*)

SUKE. Well, anysomehow, sah, you'se done cawn't see her dis mawnin'. Kase she ain't gwine ter see no fellahs today. No, sah!

CHIP (*whcedling*). O but look here, now. (*Takes out another dollar and jingles the two together.*) How do you like the clink, clink, clink—eh?

Enter MRS. W., R.

MRS. W. (*advancing to them*). Mr. Whitney, is it not?

CHIP. You've struck it the first clip, ma'am. But I ain't much used to that handle. Most folks put it "Chip" for short.

MRS. W. (*sweetly*). Very well, then, I'll say "Chip," too. (*He grins.*) I am so sorry, you poor boy, that my Beth does not care more for your company than she does. (*SUKE returns to kitchen.*)

CHIP. O you're joking.

MRS. W. Joking? O no.

CHIP. Or bluffing.

MRS. W. Bluffing?

CHIP. Sure, Mike! I know Beth.

MRS. W. Then of course you know that for years her affections have been entirely centered upon Mr. Philley.

CHIP. That guy? Rats! I knocked his eye out.

MRS. W. It is a hard task, Chip, to have to tell you this. You are such a nice, refined, manly boy.

CHIP. Holy smoke!

MRS. W. A real—what is it? Diamond in the rough.

CHIP. Me?

MRS. W. That I do so hate to cause you disappointment.

CHIP. O cut the gush, ma'am. It don't go down.

MRS. W. But of course these long attachments—(*hand on his arm.*)

CHIP. Rats! She hates that young Philley! She hain't got no sort o' use for—(*trying to shake her hand off.*)

MRS. W. (*leading him gently to door, smiling sweetly and sympathetically, not heeding his protests at all.*) And you know—

CHIP. Not me!

MRS. W. In spite of petty quarrels and little misunderstandings, they always endure. And so—

CHIP (*at door*). So you want me to beat it. Humph! I tumble.

MRS. W. Good-bye, Chip. As I said, I am very sorry for you. I know what deep suffering it will cost you, and I am very, very sorry. But you see how it is.

CHIP. Yes, ma'am—yes, I see. I'm next! I'm on! I savvy! O yes! One of us two is bughouse. Is it you—or me?

MRS. W. (*smiling as sweetly as ever*). As I said my poor boy—

CHIP (*pulls away from her and exits, R*). So long!

MRS. W. (*walking back to C.*). O it is working—it is certainly working—more beautifully than I even dared to hope. And what a new interest in life it is for me! It's just as the Professor said. It's making my whole life different. (*Telephone rings. She answers.*) Hello! Yes, Charles William, it is Nettie talking. Of course I'm all

right. Why shouldn't I be? What? O yes, yes—never felt better in my life. What? Who? O Dr. Hume. Certainly, dear husband, bring him to luncheon, by all means. Why, you know, Charles William, we are always glad to have people drop into lunch unexpectedly. Why, Suke enjoys the little extra work it makes her. Of course. Good-bye. (*Hangs up receiver and turns away from telephone.*) It is rather strange. What kind of a business deal can he be having with Dr. Hume, I wonder, that won't give him time to go home? Suke never likes a guest at lunch. (*Catches herself and puts hands over lips.*) O what am I saying? (*Calls.*) Suke!

SUKE (*sticks head in from kitchen*). Yas'm.

MRS. W. Mr. Weeden has just called up that he will bring Dr. Hume home to lunch with him. (*SUKE frowns and starts to speak in protest, but MRS. W. gives her no chance.*) I know, Suke, how delighted you always are to have company at lunch, and I am sure it will be a great joy to you to make a little extra effort for such an old friend of the family as our doctor.

SUKE (*grudgingly*). Yas'm. (*Withdraws.*)

Enter BETH, R.

BETH. Mamma!

MRS. W. (*turning*). Yes, dear.

BETH. Are you all right?

MRS. W. Why, of course I'm all right. What can you mean, child? I'm always all right.

BETH (*looking at her closely*). I know, but—(*hesitates*)—say, Mamma, do you know anything about what became of my left glove?

MRS. W. Glove? No. I put one of them on your chiffo-nier last night.

BETH. Yes, I found that—it was the right one. I left them both on the table in the sitting-room yesterday morning, and now one is missing.

MRS. W. I'm sure I don't know anything of it. I carried all the things from the sitting-room upstairs.

Enter SUKE from kitchen. Listens.

BETH. Yes, I know. I found everything but that. Do you think that Suke—

MRS. W. Suke? O no; certainly not. I am sure Suke is too honest and truthful to touch a thing that wasn't her own. (Suke *shakes head, exits.*)

BETH. Why, Mamma! (*Stares at her a moment, but her smile does not change, so turns to R. again.*) Well, I'll take another hunt. (*Exits R.*)

Enter JOTHAM noisily from kitchen with finished chair.

JOTHAM. See, Mum. See. I fix him. Fix him fine.

MRS. W. Indeed you did, Jotham. (*Examines chair.*) And it's just as good as new, isn't it? I am so glad. (JOTHAM *stands grinning with delight.*) And so proud of you, Jotham. I was afraid I might have to throw it away, but it was always such a good old chair, and I know what a help you always are.

JOTHAM (*with silly grin*). Yes, Mum.

MRS. W. And what a fine mind you have—so bright—so wise—so smart.

JOTHAM (*as before*). Yes, mum.

MRS. W. So I just said to myself, "Jotham can do anything—yes anything." And you see. (*Points to chair significantly. He grins proudly. Doorbell rings. SUKE comes in from kitchen, crosses to R.*) Bring any callers right in here this morning, Suke.

SUKE. Yas'm. (*Exits R.*)

JOTHAM (*excitedly, pantomimes his words*). I find the place! I find every piece! I find the stick-em! I fasten 'em tight! I make 'em stick! All my own self!

MRS. W. Of course. It is just as I have always wanted to say, Jotham. You are bright and smart. You have a fine mind. You can do anything. (*He starts for kitchen.*) Set it back against the wall as you go out, Jotham.

JOTHAM (*picks up chair and starts*). Yes, Mum. I am so bright—so smart—I can do anything—anything. (*Sets chair against wall and exits kitchen.*)

Enter SUKE, R.

SUKE (*looking scared*). It done am dat black voodoo doctah fellah, Mum.

MRS. W. (*puzzled*). Black voodoo doctor?

SUKE (*rolling eyes*). Yas'm. Dat witch doctor—had I done better let—

MRS. W. Why, who, what? Witch doctor?

Enter PROF. B. M., R.

MRS. W. Professor, this is so kind of you. Do come right in and sit down. (*Shakes hands with him, while SUKE backs off out to kitchen, keeping her gaze fastened on him till she is safely off stage.*)

PROF. B. M. (*sits*). O, I can but a minute tarry with Madame—but one little minute linger with her by the way. I wanted only to see how well you were progressing this lovely morning. (*Looks around room.*) I see all is well. All is good. (*Looks at her critically.*) Madame is good, too. Is it not true? And the new—what you call? experiment—how goes it with Madame?

MRS. W. Beautifully, Professor. Of course, I have as yet been able to make but a very small start, you know; but every little suggestion I have a chance to drop seems to have taken some root already—even with my servants and my little boy—and—well, you can see some of the most visible results for yourself. (*Waves hand around room. Sits.*)

PROF. B. M. (*looking around room, enthusiastically*). It is true—superb, Madame! But remember, it is not the one suggestion, nor yet the two, but the many, whether the auto-suggestion, or the communicated suggestion, that does the work. Listen! You drive a nail. (*She nods.*) The first blow of the mallet—hammer—what you say?

MRS. W. Hammer.

PROF. B. M. It is well—hammer, then—may not more than make a dent—a crease—a mark—see? May not even, so to speak, pierce through the surface of the wood. But do you stop? (*She shakes head.*) No! You are no fool, Madame—no lunatic—no idiot—what you say? You do not stop. You keep pounding, pounding, pounding at the same

nail—the very same nail, Madame, till it strikes home to the very soul of the wood! See?

MRS. W. Yes, yes. It is very plain, Professor. It is the force of repeated suggestions.

PROF. B. M. Precisely, Madame. And remember your Bible again, Madame. "Whatsoever you ask, believe that you have already received it—"

MRS. W. (*repeats, dreamily*). "That ye have already received it,—"

PROF. B. M. (*nods*). "And ye shall receive it." "According to your faith, be it unto you." (*Rises.*)

MRS. W. Yes, yes—"according to your faith." (*Rises.*)

PROF. B. M. And I, Madame, I must now away to the residence of Madame de Secretary, your so good friend.

MRS. W. Yes.

PROF. B. M. And I will tell her with much joy how well it is with her friend of the blue, blue eyes.

MRS. W. Do. Tell all my friends—everybody—everywhere! I want every one to know how exceedingly blessed I am in my home and family. And you will come again. Come often, that I may learn more—more—more of this wonderful philosophy that is to make my whole life different!

PROF. B. M. Assuredly, Madame. I will with delight come many, many times. (*Bows low.*) Be the morning good to you, Madame. (*Goes R.*)

MRS. W. That is a very sweet way of putting our conventional "Good morning," Professor. (*Following him to door.*)

PROF. B. M. And remember, "According to your faith, be it unto you." (*Exits, R.*)

MRS. W. What a wonderful man! What a wonderful creed! And what wonders it is already working in me and my home! I say to myself, "I must keep sweet! I can keep sweet! I will keep sweet!" and I make myself smile, smile, smile, and—why, I don't feel any temptation to be anything else. That's the mental attitude, I suppose. Such a short time I've had to think about it, too. Where is that little book he loaned me last night, I wonder? "Just How

to Wake the Solar Plexus." It's in the sitting-room. I have time enough now to concentrate for—(*goes L. while speaking, and is about to pass out of door, when—*)

Enter JACK, R.

JACK. Are you alone, Mrs. Weeden?

MRS. W. (*turns quickly*). Yes, Jack.

JACK. I have a music book here I borrowed of Beth when we were practicing for the cantata at the church. I thought I'd stop and leave it on my way down town.

MRS. W. (*cheerily*). All right, Jack. (*Takes book.*

JACK turns toward R.)

JACK (*at door, turns back*). Is she—is she—going to—sing in the choir?

MRS. W. Of course.

JACK. She is? Why, I heard—

MRS. W. Certainly she is going to sing in the choir. She loves music, and she loves church work. And besides—(*smiling at him archly*)—aren't you there?

JACK. I? Why, of course, but—(*mystified*).

MRS. W. And isn't that enough? Surely, Jack, you are not so blind that you do not know how much she has always thought of you?

JACK (*sadly*). Once I thought so, but—

MRS. W. And still thinks. Why, Jack, she wouldn't even look at any other boy. Surely you must know that.

JACK. Look? Humph! Why, lately—

MRS. W. And it would just break her heart if anything came between you.

JACK. Why, Mrs. Weeden, you evidently don't—

MRS. W. Don't get discouraged or down-hearted. It will all come right. I know how much she thinks of you.

JACK. Wish I did. (*Pulls out glove and looks at it slyly.*)

MRS. W. And Beth's a good girl.

JACK. Of course. (*Kisses glove bashfully, keeping eye on MRS. W.*)

MRS. W. She wouldn't cause you any unnecessary pain for the world. But you must have faith—and be patient—

JACK. Faith? (*Doorbell rings. He replaces glove in guilty haste.*) This must be your busy day.

MRS. W. I'd better answer the bell, if you will excuse me. Suke is busy with lunch.

JACK. Certainly. (*She exits R.*) What in the world can be the matter with Mrs. Weeden. Does she really believe what she says, or is she trying to make a fool of me, or to cover up something? She surely acts as if she had suddenly taken leave of her senses.

MRS. W. (*off R.*). Come right in this way, Brother and Sister Dunning.

Enter MRS. W., R., followed by REV. D. and MRS. D.

MRS. W. I am spending the forenoon in the breakfast-room, you see, to be nearer the kitchen in case I need to lend a hand in hurrying the luncheon.

REV. D. Quite right, Sister Weeden.

MRS. D. Certainly, Sister Weeden.

REV. D. And how do you do, Mr. Philley? (*Shakes hands with JACK.*)

MRS. D. Yes, how are you, Mr. Philley? (*Shaking hands.*)

JACK. I'm always well, thank you.

REV. D. That's good. (*Sits lounge.*)

MRS. D. Very good. (*Sits beside him on lounge.*)

JACK. I must hurry on down to the office, Mrs. Weeden. You will give Beth the book?

MRS. W. Certainly. She will be so disappointed not to see you. (*Turns to REV. D. and MRS. D.*) She thinks so much of Jack, you know. (*Turns to JACK.*) But she is very busy in her room this morning. Beth is always such a great help to me. (*JACK bows, exits R.*)

REV. D. I wouldn't have thought she cared for housework.

MRS. D. No, indeed. Not a bit for housework.

MRS. W. O she has a great taste for it and is very skillful and neat and tidy. I do not know what I should do without Beth. (*They exchange glances.*)

REV. D. We called this morning, Sister Weeden, because we heard that you were not well.

MRS. D. (*nodding*). That you were sick.

MRS. W. (*amazed*). Sick? Me sick?

REV. D. Exactly.

MRS. D. Precisely.

MRS. W. Well, I can't understand that, I am sure. I am never sick. I hardly know what the word means.

REV. D. (*slightly embarrassed*). We were afraid the overwork of yesterday—

MRS. D. And the worry—

MRS. W. (*to REV. D.*). Overwork? Pardon me, Brother Dunning, but I really can't understand. I never have to work hard. My work is always done up, as you can see for yourself. (*Waving hand to room.*) How can I have much to do myself, when my family is so very helpful and my servants so trusty and willing?

REV. D. (*embarrassed*). Ahem! I—

MRS. W. (*to MRS. D.*). As to worry, Sister Dunning, why, I haven't a single thing in the world to worry about. I have everything I want, just as I want it, the nicest home, the kindest, most devoted husband, the best-mannered and most thoughtful children in town. What could I possibly find to worry about? (*They exchange glances again.*)

REV. D. (*pityingly*). Does your head ache?

MRS. D. Don't you feel dizzy?

MRS. W. Headache? Dizzy? Should say not. I feel as young and light and gay as any young girl. What can you mean?

REV. D. Why, you don't seem quite natural.

MRS. D. Not quite yourself.

MRS. W. I assure you, I feel very natural, indeed, and altogether myself.

Enter BETH, R.

BETH. Are you all right, Mamma? O how are you, Rev. and Mrs. Dunning?

REV. D. AND MRS. D. (*together, bowing*). Good morning, Miss Beth.

BETH. I did not know you were here. I was just working in my room.

MRS. W. Yes, dear, I was just telling Brother and Sister Dunning what a help you have always been to me, so industrious, so neat, so tidy—

BETH (*uneasily*). Mamma!

MRS. W. And, by the way, Jack was just here. He left this book. (*Hands it.*)

BETH (*taking it*). Jack!

MRS. W. Yes. He was sorry not to see you, and I told him how disappointed you would be, too, but he had to hurry.

BETH. Yes. (*Sits chair near L., turning leaves of book idly in embarrassment.*)

MRS. W. (*to REV. D. and MRS. D.*). I have always been so pleased over the attachment between Beth and Jack. They never can endure being out of one another's company very long, you know. And Jack's such a fine young man—the nicest boy I have ever known anywhere. Some girls might flirt around with other fellows, and worry their parents half to death over undesirable associations, but we never have to think of that for a moment with our Beth. She is always so devoted and so true to her old playmate. (*Beams on BETH.*)

REV. D. (*astounded*). Indeed!

MRS. D. Really?

REV. D. And are you going to join the choir, Miss Beth?

MRS. D. Of course you won't think of disappointing us all by refusing, Miss Beth? (*She does not answer, does not even look up.*)

REV. D. You are surely going to sing?

MRS. D. To sing for the church?

BETH (*looks helplessly first at MRS. W., then at them*). Why, I—I—guess so.

MRS. W. Why, of course she is. Beth loves to sing, and she so thoroughly enjoys all church work, you know.

REV. D. (*rising uneasily*). Indeed!

MRS. D. (*rising uneasily*). Really?

REV. D. (*beaming on BETH*). So glad to hear it.

MRS. D. Delighted, Miss Beth.

MRS. W. (*rising*). Must you go?

REV. D. Yes, we are in a hurry.

MRS. D. Very much of a hurry.

REV. D. (*turns to door*). And so—

MRS. D. (*follows*). We must.

REV. D. (*turning back at door*). I do hope you will not be sick, sister.

MRS. D. (*clinging to his arm*). Yes, yes—sick, or—or—or—anything else.

MRS. W. O there's no danger of my ever being sick, or—or—anything, I assure you. I am too well, too happy, and altogether too blessed in my splendid home, my perfect pattern of a husband, and my model children, to ever have any excuse for being anything but ridiculously well. The very idea! (*Laughs merrily.*)

REV. D. (*dubiously*). Well, good morning.

MRS. D. Good morning.

MRS. W. I'll go to the hall door with you. (*Accompanies them out.*)

BETH (*follows to door R. and looks out after them, in despair*). O dear! It just seems to get worse and worse! It is certainly hopeless! What can we do? Mamma knows I hate to sing in public, knows how I abominate church work, and how I abhor—yes, abhor—yes, actually detest, Jack Philley any more; and yet, somehow, there's something or other about her this morning that I don't dare oppose, or even contradict. Surely she has found out by this time, too, that I like—like Chip—has it all been too much for her mind? Is she crazy? Can she be? My room is in tip-top order for the first time in a century, anyway, so she can take all the women in town there, if she likes; but—whew! maybe I'm not tired! It's more work than I've done before in months. (*Sighs.*) But I'll be tired yet before night, if I have to keep on trying to live up to the character she's been giving me all the morning. I feel like she must have been feeling all these days when she kept saying, "O dear, dear, dear, dear!" I do wish I knew what became of my glove. It is so strange. I would like

to ask Suke about it, but I don't dare now after all Mamma said about her honesty. Humph! One glove wouldn't be much use to her, anyway; but I'll not say a word to her, of course—not a word. But that glove—that glove. (*Walks toward L., musing.*)

CHIP, *sneaking in from kitchen, whispering cautiously.*

CHIP. Beth!

BETH (*turning, startled*). Chip!

CHIP (*looking all around slyly*). 'Sh! Saw the old woman talking with the parson and his stronger half at the front door, so I sneaked in the back. See? Thought I could catch you.

BETH. But, Chip, it is a great risk.

CHIP. Risk? Rats! "Faint heart never won fair lady—nothing ventured, nothing gained—all's fair in love and war," old girl! Those are the Golden Texts at my Sunday School.

BETH. But, Chip, listen. We're all so worried. Mamma isn't—isn't—well; she isn't quite well—mentally, you know. We're a little afraid she may be—er—

CHIP. Bughouse?

BETH. Chip!

CHIP. Well, I thought by the spiel that she put up to me this morning that she had wheels in her upper story all right.

BETH. Chip!

CHIP (*enjoying shocking her*). Bats in her belfry, you know, and all that, or else she was laying an almighty cute bluff.

BETH. Chip!

CHIP. I tried to call the bluff, but no go. She stuck to the game till the last card was played, and I passed. Now, Beth, I've got to sneak, you know, but—hang it all, old girl—when can I see you?

BETH (*distressed*). I don't know, Chip. It will be very hard till—till—we are sure that Mamma is—is—all right. She feels so bad about it—and she thinks so much of Jack, you know. I don't dare oppose her.

CHIP (*more loudly than before*). Rats!

BETH. (*with uneasy glance toward R. door*). 'Sh!

CHIP. But, dodgast it all, I tell you I've got to—

BETH. 'Sh!

CHIP. Where'll you be tonight?

BETH (*making wry face*). Choir practice.

CHIP (*whistles in surprise*). Gee! Choir? That's a hot one!

BETH. I know, but—I must—I just must!

CHIP. Well, I'll hang 'round the gospel blow-out, then.

BETH. O Chip, you musn't!

CHIP (*imitating her*). But I must! I just must! And I'll see you, some way, if I have to kidnap you. You know what them tragic guys say at the ten-cent shows—by fair means or by foul!

BETH. 'Sh!

CHIP. I'm off now. But I'll see you tonight, sure. So long! (*Exits.*)

BETH (*walking back toward R.*). Gracious! This is a pretty state of things, I must say! I musn't see him against Mamma's orders. Why, I never actually disobeyed her in my life, and I certainly shan't begin now for a hundred thousand Chip Whitneys! It isn't a bit right in him to insist. (*Paces back and forth nervously.*) How do I really feel about Chip, anyway? Sometimes he almost repels me. Again he really fascinates me. Is this love—really true love? If it is, why, of course, it is excuse enough for anything—everything—that might happen. What is it Mamma says so much? "Love save my soul!" Love—save—my—soul! It means a big lot, that's sure. Yes, if it is really love, it can't be really wrong to meet Chip secretly, when I can't meet him any other way, for love will save my soul! Yes, if it is love—but is it? I wish I knew. But—I did have such good times with Jack once, and he was always so good and so polite to me—used me so like a real lady. And Chip—O is it love? I don't know! I don't know! Love save my soul!! (*Sinks in lounge.*)

Enter MRS. W., R.

MRS. W. I am so glad, dear, to have you in the choir, where you can do some good with your sweet voice. And Jack will be, too. It is such a comfort to me to have you so fond of that dear, noble boy—and he of you. (*Walks to door L.*)

BETH (*aside*). Love save my soul!

Enter SUKE, R.

SUKE (*holding apron in front of her, filled with all kinds of articles*). If yo' done please, Mum—

MRS. W. AND BETH (*together*). Why, Suke!

SUKE. I jest done wants to brung back to you-uns all de t'ings I'se—I'se—I'se—borrowed.

MRS. W. AND BETH (*together*). Borrowed?

SUKE. Yas'h, please Mum—borrowed—ebbah since I done comed to dis heah place. I'se gwine to be more keerful to brung 'em right straight back aftah dis heah—I done tells yo'. (*Dumps things in heap on lounge.*)

BETH. O my lace handkerchief.

SUKE. Yas'm. It suah am.

MRS. W. My black scarf!

BETH. Dolly's blue ribbon, and your white apron, Mamma!

SUKE. Yas'm. 'Spects dat am right.

MRS. W. Olive's fancy hairpin she lost last month!

BETH. Will's scarfpin!

MRS. W. Your father's charm, Beth! He thought he left it down town.

SUKE (*meekly*). Yas'm.

MRS. W. AND BETH (*together*). Dolly's dollar! (*SUKE hangs head.*)

BETH (*pawing things over*). O so many things we thought were lost!

SUKE (*sadly*). Yas'm. I jes' done borrowed 'em, please Mum. I done seemed to forget to brung 'em back afore.

MRS. W. Well, Beth, we won't take time to look them all over now. It is so good of you, Suke, to be so particular to bring back every single thing. Some girls would have forgotten, but you are so honest, so truthful.

SUKE (*eagerly*). Yas'm.

MRS. W. Take them all up to my room now, Suke, and we'll sort them after luncheon.

SUKE. Yas'm. (*Gathers them up again in her apron. Exits R.*)

BETH. But my glove wasn't among them. So Suke couldn't have taken it. It is so strange. What could have become of that glove?

MR. W. (*off R.*). Come right in this way, doctor.

Enter MR. W., R., with DR. HUME.

MRS. W. (*goes to meet them*). So glad to see you, Dr. Hume. (*They shake hands. MR. W. throws hat, gloves, overcoat and muffler on lounge.*)

DR. HUME (*watching her closely*). I'm certainly glad to come, Mrs. Weeden. You see, Charles William and I had some business and we couldn't get it all out of the way before luncheon, so here I am. I didn't want to make you so much trouble, but—

MRS. W. No trouble at all, doctor. Not the least. It is never any trouble to us to have an extra guest or two at table. My house, you know, is always in perfect order. Charles William and the children are all such a help in keeping things picked up, and—(*MR. W. slyly picks up his things from the lounge and carries them out R., walking on tip-toe.*)

DR. H. Yes, yes. I know! Of course! Of course! (*Looks helplessly around for MR. W., who tip-toes in at R.*)

MR. W. Your cheeks are as red as roses, Nettie. You haven't a fever, have you?

MRS. W. A fever? Of course not.

DR. H. That's right, Charles William. (*Speaks with great assumption of gayety, but it plainly shows itself to be forced for effect.*) Work me up a case if you can. Just let me see your tongue and feel your pulse, Mrs. Weeden.

MRS. W. (*shuts lips tightly together and puts hands behind back*). Nonsense!

DR. H. No? Well, I won't insist, of course. But prac-

tice isn't very brisk just now—all my patients are getting well on my hands—and I've got to do something to keep out of the poorhouse, you know.

MRS. W. Sorry for you, Dr. Hume. You look badly reduced. But no pills and powders here. I'm so well and so happy, I suppose I really ought to feel ashamed of myself. But you know how Charles William and the children have always spoiled me. Think of it, Doctor. What a blessing it is to be married almost twenty-one years—isn't it twenty-one, Charles William? and never to have a single quarrel—not a solitary cross or unpleasant word! Isn't it grand to think of? Why, such harmony in the home would make any woman above all worry and sick thoughts, you know. How could I be sick? (*Smiles tenderly on MR. W., who watches her uneasily.*)

DR. H. Yes, yes. Of course. You are right, of course.

MR. W. Come out into the sitting-room Doc, and wait till luncheon is ready. We'll talk things over. (*Looks at him significantly and leads the way out L. door.*)

Enter DOLLY, R.

DOLLY (*meets MRS. W.'s bland smile and begins to walk on tip-toe in frightened way*). O Mamma, it's a cinch—I mean, it's no joke—I mean it's quite sure that I'm dog-goned—I mean I'm very hungry. We had an exam today—I mean a quiz—er—an examination—and it's all to the good—I mean, it's almost certain that I'm to be promoted. Now, wouldn't that make you sit up and take notice?—er—I mean, Mamma, wouldn't that please you?

MRS. W. It certainly does please me, Dolly. But then, I am always proud of my little girl. And with such good reason. She is so choice of her language, and so lady-like and refined in her manners. (*Pats her cheek.*) I can already see what a splendid woman she will some day make. (*MR. W. and DR. H. have been at door at L. and have listened unobserved.*)

Enter WILL, R., MR. W. and DR. H., L.

WILL (*runs in R., checks himself and comes to MRS. W. on tip-toe*). Are you all right, Manma?

MRS. W. All right? Why, of course. Doctor, haven't you read lately the dangers our young boys are in from the cigarette evil?

DR. H. Of course. It is one of the greatest menaces to the health and development of the rising generation.

MRS. W. (*goes to MR. W. and takes his arm, smiling at him fondly*). O Charles William, aren't you glad our dear boy is safe from it? Aren't we happy to have him too strong, and high, and good and manly to be even tempted into the sort of company that have such bad habits?

MR. W. Of course. (*WILL hangs head, walks about nervously, hands in pockets.*)

Enter OLIVE, R.

OLIVE (*runs in R.*). O Mother!

MRS. W. Yes, Olive.

OLIVE. Are you all right?

MRS. W. All right? What can you all mean? Of course I'm all right.

OLIVE. How do you do, Dr. Hume. (*Shakes hands with him.*) I just wanted to tell you, Mother, that I took my new silk dress back to Marston's this morning and exchanged it for new sheets, pillow cases, towels, tablecloths and napkins, and I got a splendid supply of good, serviceable household linen, which you know I was very badly in need of, while I didn't really need the dress at all.

MRS. W. I know, Olive, and it pleases me so much to have you always so sensible and economical. You have no idea what a saving and thrifty housewife my daughter is, Doctor.

DR. H. No, no. Of course. Glad to hear it—very glad.

MRS. W. Yes, indeed. If she had been wasteful or extravagant, like some women, I don't know what I'd do. But I am really proud of her. (*Pats her shoulder, smiling at her.*)

DOLLY (*aside to BETH*). Has she kept up that crazy smile all day?

BETH (*anxiously*). All day.

OLIVE. And do you know, Mother, Caleb has got such an industrious fit on ever since he came over here this morning. Why, he's done more today already than I've known him to do for months together!

MRS. W. Caleb is naturally ambitious.

ALL (*in amazement*). Ambitious?

MRS. W. He loves work.

ALL (*as before*). What?

MRS. W. And he always keeps things up so nice around the house.

ALL (*in dismay*). O dear! (DR. H. and MR. W. at L., MRS. W. and OLIVE at C., BETH and DOLLY at R., WILL beside fireplace, looking into it.)

Enter SUKE, from kitchen.

SUKE. Yo' luncheon am done ready now, Mum, out in de dining-room.

MRS. W. All right, Suke. Won't you stay, Olive?

OLIVE. No, I must get back to give Caleb his lunch. (*Starts R. When she passes BETH, speaks aside.*) Watch her carefully, Beth. (BETH *nods*.)

MRS. W. Don't wait for me, Charles William. (*Follows OLIVE out R.*)

MR. W. Well, Doc, for heaven's sake tell us what you think about her! (ALL *come closer, listen anxiously*.)

DR. H. Charles William, it looks serious—mighty serious. Some of the symptoms are positively alarming—startling. I have fears—grave fears.

ALL. O dear! (*Looking at one another*.)

MR. W. But what can we do?

DR. H. Well, first you must keep very close watch of her day and night for signs of violence.

ALL (*in alarm*). Violence?

DR. H. One never knows what form this affliction may take. It's wisest to be prepared for anything. (*Mysteriously*.)

ALL. O dear!

DR. H. Above all, never oppose her in the least thing.

Humor every little whim. Let her have her own way, no matter how absurd, and—and—

ALL (*eagerly*). Yes?

DR. H. Hope for the best, but—(*shakes head portentously*)—prepare for the worst.

ALL. O dear!

DR. H. (*hand on MR. WEEDEN's shoulder*). It is a sad affliction, my friend, but bear up bravely.

MR. W. I'll try. You'll keep an eye on her, Doc?

DR. H. Sure, old man. I'll stand by you, whatever may develop. Put it there. (*They shake hands.*)

MR. W. Well, we must go to luncheon. Come right out through this way, Doc. (*Leads out through kitchen door. All follow but BETH.*)

BETH (*after watching them off*). We mustn't oppose her. We must humor her. We must let her have her way. Then I can't see Chip—I musn't—I shan't—and I won't! I'll write him a note and tell him just how it is. I'll ask him to wait—wait a week, two weeks, three weeks—a month, three months. O dear! Maybe a year—ten years—until we know Mamma is cured—completely cured! If he really thinks me worth having, he'll surely think me worth waiting for. O Chip! Chip! Love save my soul! (*Exits through kitchen, after pause.*)

Enter WILL, R., looks all around, slyly takes cigarettes from pocket and throws them in fire.

WILL. Darned old cigarettes. That's the last of them things, forever and ever. Amen! (*Exits, L.*)

Enter MRS. W., R., just in time to see and hear him without his seeing her.

MRS. W. It has commenced to come true already—the beautiful, beautiful fairy tale of the Subconscious Mind! They seem to think I am losing my mind. Humph! On the contrary, I am just finding it! “According to your faith be it unto you.” Yes, yes. And it's all true. (*Starts out kitchen.*) “According to your faith.” “According to your faith.”

CURTAIN.

ACT III.

SCENE: *Same as Act I, except that the room is in perfect order. The setting is exactly in accordance with Scene Plot. The lounge is piled with evergreen boughs, wreaths of ivy or any decorative green stuff that may be available, either natural or artificial. Have places previously selected and prepared for the hanging of each decoration, to avoid all awkwardness.*

Curtain rises disclosing OLIVE, BETH, DOLLY and WILL on stage. OLIVE and BETH are holding one long string of green between them, looking around room for a suitable place for it. WILL is fastening smaller decorations on wall, etc., at R. DOLLY is by lounge, sorting them over and handing them to WILL as he needs them.

OLIVE. Where shall we put it?

BETH (*points up at motto over archway*). Over the motto.

OLIVE. No. I'm sure that's where Caleb will want to hang his flag.

WILL (*looking around over shoulder*). Why not over the piano?

BETH AND OLIVE (*together, pointing*). There!

WILL. Sure.

BETH. It would look nicely there, I think. (*Starts to step on chair to climb to piano.*)

OLIVE. Yes; but can you reach?

BETH. Easily—from the piano. (*Climbs up.*) Now let me have it.

OLIVE (*looks anxiously toward door R.*). I do hope we can get all fixed up before Mamma comes home.

DOLLY. O we can, all right. We told Papa to keep her out as long as he possibly could.

OLIVE. Isn't it ridiculous the way those two old married folks have gone back twenty-one years to their spooney days? (*Busy with decorations.*)

BETH. It may be ridiculous, but I like it.

OLIVE. O so do I.

DOLLY. We all seem to enjoy it with them.

WILL. It's naughty, but it's nice.

OLIVE. Papa seems like a different man.

BETH. }

DOLLY. } (*together*). He is!

WILL. }

OLIVE. But, for that matter, you all seem different.

WILL. How about yourself?

DOLLY. And Caleb?

OLIVE. Guilty. It is really a miracle the way this whole blessed family has been transformed.

BETH. Isn't it? How's that, Olive?

OLIVE (*surveying wreath critically*). Fine!

BETH. As for Manma, do you know I think we're just beginning to get acquainted with our real Mamma.

WILL. That's just it, Beth.

THE OTHERS. Of course.

BETH. Hand me some more of the green, Olive, while I'm up here.

OLIVE (*handing her a piece*). Have you seen Chip Whitney lately, Beth?

BETH. No. Not since the morning we had that scare about Manma, and summoned the doctor post haste. Wasn't that funny?

DOLLY. It didn't seem so very funny then.

WILL. Should say not.

BETH. How long ago was it? It seems like months.

OLIVE. It isn't, though. It is just—let me see—it was the day after I bought that pale blue silk. (*Counts on fingers.*) One, two, three weeks.

DOLLY. Only three weeks? My!

WILL. A whole lot can happen in three weeks?

DOLLY. Should say so.

BETH. Well, speaking of Chip, he sneaked in here that morning, and he was bound he would hang around the church that night and see me after choir practice.

OLIVE. The very idea!

ALL (*after a pause*). Well?

BETH. Of course, you know what the doctor said about our humoring Mamma in everything.

ALL. Yes.

BETH. So I didn't know what to do. I—I—I—

ALL. Yes?

BETH. Well, I just wrote him a firm, decided note—maybe it didn't hurt to have to do it.

OLIVE (*sympathetically*). I know, Beth.

DOLLY. And what did you tell him, Beth?

BETH. Why, I just told him plainly that he simply mustn't follow me, anywhere at all, for I positively couldn't and wouldn't see him till—till—till—you know.

OLIVE. Good for you, Beth.

BETH. Fortunately, the place for choir meeting was changed that very night, so we didn't meet at the church, and he couldn't have found me very easily if he had tried.

WILL. And how did he take the note, Beth? Did he come up to the scratch like a man?

BETH. I don't know.

ALL. Don't know!

BETH. No, I really don't know what to think of the way he's done.

ALL. Why?

BETH. Why, almost ever since, he's—he's—

OLIVE. What, Beth?

BETH. Well, he's managed to bother and worry me a lot, in spite of all I had said and written.

WILL. Bothered? (BETH *nods*.)

DOLLY. Worried? (BETH *nods*.)

OLIVE. But how?

BETH. O lots of ways.

OLIVE. Such as—

BETH. Sending notes, for one thing.

OLIVE. Notes? (BETH *nods*.) By whom?

WILL. Me!

DOLLY. And me!

BETH. And even Jotham.

OLIVE. Humph! (*Disgustedly*.)

BETH. More green, please, a piece for this corner.

OLIVE (*hands piece*). Will this do? (BETH *nods*.) Well, how else did he worry you, Beth?

BETH. O Chip! Why, he sneaked around and tried to bribe Suke to let him in to see me.

OLIVE. Pshaw!

BETH. And he'd hang around the yard, and porch, and hedge at night, when I was going out or coming in.

DOLLY (*shuddering*). Mercy!

BETH. But I never saw him.

DOLLY. Then how did you know?

BETH. O I heard him—sensed him—I felt his presence—I can't explain, but—you know, Olive.

OLIVE. Yes, I understand. It was abominable of him.

WILL (*aside, to DOLLY*). They say he's running around with Alice Derby now.

DOLLY (*looking around at BETH, apprehensively*). 'Sh!

OLIVE. And now, Beth, what are you going to do?

BETH. I—don't—know.

ALL. Don't know?

BETH. No. I just can't make up my mind. (*Sighs*.) I don't know what I *want* to do—that's the worst of it.

ALL. Why?

BETH. Well, you see, I—I—

ALL (*eagerly*). Yes?

BETH. I like Chip. I just can't help it, and—

ALL. Pshaw!

BETH. Well, I do, and I won't deny the truth. But still I don't think he's done just right not to do as I asked him to about this, when he knew how worried we all were about Mamma.

OLIVE (*scornfully*). Should say not.

BETH. And yet I can't feel that I'm doing right by him to make him wait any longer, when there is really no excuse—

OLIVE. Humph!

BETH. So—so—I'll just have to talk it all over with Mamma, and I shall do exactly as she says.

ALL. Good for you!

BETH. If I only knew which I feel for him—whether I love him or hate him most. (*Aside.*)

OLIVE. Mamma will know how to settle it.

BETH. Yes, of course. Somehow, I feel that Mamma knows me really better than I know myself.

OLIVE. }

WILL. } (*Together.*) Me too.

DOLLY. }

BETH. Isn't it wonderful? (*Finishes arranging wreath.*) How's that?

ALL. Fine!

WILL. And how are these?

ALL. Splendid!

BETH. More, Olive, please. For here, and here, you see. (*OLIVE hands it.*)

CALEB comes in R. with large flag, followed by JOTHAM. They both walk briskly, moving and speaking throughout with an alertness of manner quite different from their former shiftless habit.

CALEB. Ready for the flag?

OLIVE. Any time.

CALEB. Where'll you have it?

BETH. Any place.

OLIVE. You know best where you want it, Cale.

CALEB (*after surveying the room*). Over the archway, I guess.

JOTHAM (*pointing to motto*). Up there?

ALL (*nodding*). Yes.

JOTHAM. Then you'll need a step-ladder. I get him. (*Runs out L.*)

CALEB. I hope it won't take him long. Perhaps I'd better have gone myself for it. I have so much work to finish up before night I mustn't waste a minute.

OLIVE. Caleb is so busy all the time lately I can hardly get a glimpse of him.

CALEB. Have to be, Olive. That's what brings our bread and butter.

WILL. Hasn't he come out fine? (*To DOLLY, aside.*)

DOLLY. I should say he had. He's just woke up after a long nap, that's all.

BETH. How does everything look, Cale, as far as we have gone?

CALEB (*looking around*). Bully! (*Then looks at BETH, mischievously.*) Especially the statue on the piano.

WILL. That's no dead one, Cale.

DOLLY. It's a life-sized living picture.

OLIVE. An automatic image.

BETH. Thanks, everybody. (*Bows low.*) If I had time I'd make you a speech, but business is pressing.

WILL. You mean hanging, don't you?

BETH (*sweetly*). Exactly, little brother. Thank you.

CALEB (*looking around again*). Won't Mother be pleased? I'm making her a music cabinet—Jotham and I together.

ALL. Good!

OLIVE. Will you be able to finish it today?

CALEB. O yes; we must. I hope she'll like it.

BETH. Like it?

WILL. Don't you worry.

DOLLY. She'll be crazy about it.

BETH. Well, if it doesn't turn out any worse than it did when she went crazy over her "home, husband and family," we certainly won't call in the doctor.

OLIVE. Nor the preacher.

ALL (*emphatically*). No!

Enter JOTHAM, L., with step-ladder.

JOTHAM. Here he is! I find him! (*Carries ladder to position. CALEB mounts, carrying flag. Doorbell rings.*)

DOLLY. The bell!

OLIVE. Company!

BETH. And me on the piano.

WILL. What do you care? It's your piano—and you are you!

CALEB. I haven't time to stop work and get down.

ALL. Of course not.

Enter SUKE, R., followed by REV. D. and MRS. D.

SUKE. Massa and Missus Dunning, chill'ens.

ALL. All right.

REV. D. What are you doing?

MRS. D. Yes, what in the world?

OLIVE. Why, this is Mother's birthday, you know, and we're just planning a little family surprise for her. Won't you sit down?

REV. D. (*looking around*). No.

MRS. D. We mustn't.

REV. D. Where is your mother?

MRS. D. Yes, where is she?

OLIVE. Out driving.

BETH. With Papa.

REV. D. We just came in—

MRS. D. Yes, just came in.

OLIVE (*inquiringly*). Yes?

BETH (*inquiringly*). Just came in?

REV. D. (*uncertainly*). Well, we had heard so many queer things about Sister Weeden lately—

MRS. D. (*nodding emphatically*). Yes, very queer things about her.

BETH. Queer things?

OLIVE. About Mamma?

DOLLY. Our Mamma?

REV. D. We thought we'd better come and see—

MRS. D. See for ourselves.

REV. D. But—(*looks helplessly at MRS. D.*)

MRS. D. (*shaking head*). I don't know.

REV. D. Is she perfectly well?

MRS. D. And all right?

OLIVE. Indeed she is—as well as can be.

BETH. And very much all right.

DOLLY. Perfectly lovely!

WILL. Just dandy!

CALEB (*from ladder*). How's that?

ALL THE FAMILY. Very good!

REV. D. (*in great astonishment*). Why, if it isn't Cale Mead!

MRS. D. (*amazed*). Cale Mead—at work!

· CALEB (*coming down from ladder*). How do you do, Rev. Dunning—and Mrs. Dunning? (*Shakes hands with each in turn.*)

REV. D. (*mystified*). Why, is it actually the real Cale Mead—

MRS. D. Or somebody who looks exactly like him?

CALEB (*laughing*). O I'm the real thing, all right.

REV. D. This is certainly a surprise.

MRS. D. A great surprise!

CALEB. I couldn't come down before—from the ladder, you know. I hadn't the time to spare. I am very busy—

REV. D. Busy?

MRS. D. You?

CALEB (*indignantly*). Of course! (*Turns to others.*) Well, girls, when you want anything more of me, just whistle. (*Goes R.*) You'll find me pounding away in our woodshed.

ALL. All right.

JOTHAM (*calls*). I'll jest take this here step-ladder back to the barn, Mr. Caleb, and then I'll come to—

CALEB (*off R.*). All right, Jotham! Hurry!

JOTHAM (*going out L. with step-ladder*). I am so bright—so smart—I can do anything. (*Exits.*)

REV. D. (*puzzled*). I don't understand—

MRS. D. Don't understand at all.

REV. D. (*meditatively*). Everybody says—

MRS. D. Yes, everybody in town.

REV. D. (*looking around*). But—things look different to me than I expected.

MRS. D. O very much different.

REV. D. (*turns to door*). I guess we'd better go.

MRS. D. (*following*). Yes, go at once.

REV. D. And come again some time.

MRS. D. Yes, when Sister Weeden is at home.

REV. D. It was her—

MRS. D. We came to see.

REV. D. And then we'll be able to judge—(*turning back from door.*)

MRS. D. Yes, judge for ourselves.

OLIVE. I'm sure Mamma will be disappointed that she did not see you today. But we told Papa to give her a nice long ride, so we could be all through with our decorating before she returned.

REV. D. You will be at the concert tonight, Mrs. Mead?

MRS. D. Of course—the Beethoven concert?

OLIVE. No!

REV. D. No?

MRS. D. Why not?

OLIVE. I can't afford it.

REV. D. Can't afford it?

MRS. D. You?

OLIVE. No, really, I can't. To be sure, it isn't much, but Caleb and I are repairing our house, and every little counts, you know; so I must economize and be as saving in these little things as I can.

REV. D. Economize—you?

MRS. D. Saving? Olive Mead? (*They exit, R., shaking heads in wonder.*)

OLIVE (*laughing*). I guess they think I'm crazy, too.

Enter SUKE, C.

SUKE. If yo please, Mum, am dis heah yo' bwacelet?

OLIVE (*looking at it*). Bracelet? No, it is not mine.

BETH (*climbing down from piano*). Let me see, Suke. (*Suke hands it to her.*) O yes, I see. It's Cora Moore's. She had it on when she called last night. Where'd you get it, Suke?

SUKE. I done fin' it in de hall jes' now, as I went to de doah to answer de bell.

BETH. All right. I'll see that Cora gets it right away.

OLIVE. It seems to be very valuable.

BETH. Yes. I'm glad you brought it to us right away, Suke.

SUKE. Yas'm. Suke am stwictly honest and twuthful, yo' know. She would nebbah tech a t'ing dat war not her berry own! (*Backs out C. while speaking.*)

DOLLY. Except my gum. That surely cured me of chewing the stuff all of a sudden. Ugh!

WILL (*standing back with hands in pockets and surveying the room*). Well, we seem to be about finished.

DOLLY. Looks nice, doesn't it?

WILL. Now I'll just take all the scraps out to the fireplace, and—(*begins to gather up the odds and ends.*)

OLIVE. And then you can go to the store for the remainder of our eatables. (*WILL exits C.*)

DOLLY (*stands in archway looking out C.*). And I'll go with you, Billy.

WILL. Sure you will. (*From out C.*)

BETH. Then you can stop at Cora's, Dolly, and leave her bracelet. She'll probably be worried about it. Here it is. (*Hands it.*)

OLIVE. Isn't it nice that Dolly and Will take such pleasure in being together?

BETH. Yes, so much better than having them with some other school children in town.

DOLLY. Especially the boys that smoke those nasty cigarettes—ugh!

Enter WILL, C.

WILL. Or the girls who use slang.

BETH AND OLIVE (*together, teasingly*). Or chew gum.

DOLLY (*with wry face*). Ugh! (*She and WILL exit. R.*)

OLIVE. Well, Beth, we look very neat and tidy, I am sure, and now I think I must—

Enter MRS. P., R.

MRS. P. I met Will and Dolly on the porch and they said to come right in. All alone? Where's your mother?

BETH. Out riding with Papa.

MRS. P. (*sitting chair R.*). Indeed! That's something new, isn't it?

OLIVE. O they're having their honeymoon all over again these days.

BETH. And it's too delicious!

OLIVE. Besides, you see, this is her birthday, and we rather wanted her out of the way. (*Sits.*)

MRS. P. (*looking around*). I see. How nice you look in here.

BETH. Don't we? (*Sits.*)

MRS. P. Is it really true, what I have heard?

GIRLS (*both*). What?

MRS. P. Everybody in town is talking about you folks.

GIRLS. Us? Why?

MRS. P. First, they said your mother had gone crazy—that she talked like a mad woman to everybody she saw, met or who called on her, or anything—but of course I knew that wasn't true!

GIRLS (*indignantly, looking at each other*). Should say not.

MRS. P. And now they've changed the story, and they say that some miracle has taken place and made your family all over new—even to the servants and the children—maybe the animals and fowls, for all I know.

OLIVE. It's all talk, Mrs. Parker. Really, just gossip.

MRS. P. But you do seem so different—all of you. I can't help noticing it myself, whenever I see any of you.

BETH. But there was really no miracle about it, Mrs. Parker. That's absurd! That is, unless it was Mamma's resolute belief in us and our real goodness of heart.

MRS. P. (*eagerly*). Tell me. Was that honestly what made you over—and so soon?

OLIVE. Nothing made us over! Our better selves just began to come to the surface—that's all.

BETH. And only just began, too, as Olive says. We've lots and lots of things to rake away from the surface yet—rubbish of old dead thoughts, and wishes, and habits. But we've got a good start.

MRS. P. I just can't understand it. I believe in faith, and the force of desire, and the power of mind over matter, and all that. And I have heard of people making themselves all over new in a comparatively short time. But I have never in all my life heard of anybody's making a whole family over in three weeks before—and it is a miracle—a real miracle, however it looks to you.

OLIVE. But I tell you, she hasn't made us over at all, Mrs. Parker. She just, with that big, broad, deep, motherly eye of hers saw the real true selves down deep inside of us, that we had covered up with a lot of bad habits, and

worse thoughts; habits and thoughts that we were honestly secretly ashamed of. Don't you see? And she brought these real selves to the surface by literally forcing us to see them, too. That's all.

MRS. P. It's wonderful—simply wonderful, but—

BETH. Here comes Mamma now! (*They rise as—*)

MR. and MRS. W. *enter R.* MR. W. *shakes hands with* MRS. P. *quietly, but* MRS. W. *does not see her.*

MRS. W. (*looking at decorations*). O how nice—what does—

OLIVE AND BETH (*together*). Many happy returns of the day, Mamma!

MRS. W. I declare! It is my birthday! Isn't it, now? I had forgotten it was anywhere near. I seem to have been born all over again lately, anyway—born into a new world—a new life! (*Turns and sees* MRS. P.) Why, Gertrude, I am so glad to see you! (*Shakes hands with her.*) Isn't this a glorious day, and isn't it splendid to be alive? (*They converse in dumb show.*)

OLIVE. How does it look, Papa?

MR. W. Splendid! You've done well, girls.

OLIVE AND BETH. Thanks.

BETH. And did you have a nice ride?

MR. W. Glorious! Your mother is as gay and charming as a young girl again.

OLIVE. O you lovers!

BETH. Papa, you've surely got it bad!

MR. W. Guilty. That word reminds me, by the way, of a paragraph I want to read you from this morning's "Union." Listen, girls—ladies. (*Reads.*) "Charles Whitney, commonly called 'Chip,' for several months bartender at Gute's saloon, was arrested last night for burglary, caught in the very act, with several hundred dollars' worth of stolen jewels and silver upon his person."

BETH. O Chip! Chip! (*Runs to her mother, who comforts her.*)

MR. W. (*resumes reading*). "It appears that a certain young lady, to whom he had been paying attention for the

past two weeks, is in some way seriously implicated in the disgraceful affair, as well as a number of young school-boys, already notorious for their cigarette-smoking and other vicious habits. The criminal is held in the county jail awaiting trial."

BETH. O Mamma! Mamma!

MRS. W. (*embracing her tenderly*). How thankful we must all be that the young lady "seriously implicated in the disgraceful affair" was not our dear, innocent Beth; nor our Will one of the schoolboys!

ALL. Yes, indeed!

BETH. Who is the girl? Does anyone know?

MRS. P. It is Alice Derby, they say.

BETH. Mamma, I know now! I know now! (*Starts C. sadly, turns back at archway.*) I'll—be—back—soon! (*Looks up.*) Love save my soul! (*Exits C.*)

ALL. Poor girl! (*Mrs. W. slowly removes her hat, jacket, gloves, etc. OLIVE takes out C.*).

Enter DR. H., R., with bouquet of flowers.

DR. H. Who did that little bird tell me has a birthday in this family?

MRS. W. (*taking flowers*). O doctor, how thoughtful of you! Thank you! (*Crosses to piano to place flowers in a vase.*)

MR. W. Sit down, Doc.

DR. H. Can't stop. Just wanted to bring my nosegay and congratulations to the—I was about to say "bride."

Enter OLIVE, R., talks aside to Mrs. P. and Mr. W.

MR. W. Say it, then, Doc. It fits.

DR. H. (*crosses to Mrs. W.*). They thought you needed a doctor, eh?

MRS. W. (*looking over shoulder at him archly*). They seemed to.

DR. H. At the same time you thought the whole family needed a doctor, eh?

MRS. W. Something of the sort, maybe. (*Looks down bashfully.*)

DR. H. And so you yourself undertook to apply psychological treatments, eh?

MRS. W. (*turning to face him*). How did you know?

DR. H. O I finally got my eyes opened to the way the wind was blowing. I'm an old foggy, I know, but I'm not quite so far behind the times as you may think.

MRS. W. Well, doctor, hasn't it been a success?

DR. H. Unquestionably! And I congratulate you.

MRS. W. Thank you. (*They shake hands.*) It was certainly worth the effort.

DR. H. By all means. (*Turns to others.*) Well, I must go back to the office, or all my chronic cases will get well before I know it. (*Walks R.*)

MR. W. I'll go with you, Doc. (*Kisses MRS. W.*) I'll be home at the earliest possible minute, Nettie. (*Waves hand to others.*) Good-bye, all.

ALL. Good-bye. (*MR. W. and DR. H. exit R.*)

OLIVE. I must go, too. Caleb is so busy today.

MRS. P. (*astonished*). Caleb Mead busy?

OLIVE. Yes, and he needs my help. We musn't miss being back over here early for Mamma's birthday dinner.

MRS. W. No, indeed.

JOTHAM *looks in at L., then dodges back.*

OLIVE. Wasn't that someone at the side door, Mamma?

JOTHAM *looks in again and dodges back.*

OLIVE. Why, it's Jotham.

MRS. W. What is it, Jotham? Come in.

Enter JOTHAM, L., with huge bunch of sunflowers, tied with bright red ribbon, a huge bow.

JOTHAM. Please, Mum, I—I—I—(*grins with embarrassment.*) Here's these, Mum. I—I—I—picked 'em for your birthday, Mum. (*Bows very awkwardly, but very low, holding out flowers.*)

MRS. W. (*taking them*). O how nice! For my birthday! See, Gertrude! Even Jotham remembered.

OLIVE. Remembered? Should say so. He's been helping us all day.

MRS. W. How kind of you, Jotham.

JOTHAM (*nervously*). Yes, ma'am. I picked 'em—every-one—all myself. No stingy little roses—or pansies—or any o' them little bits o' things—but nice big ones—and I bought the ribbon—see what a big one, ma'am, all myself, too—for your birthday. I knowed you'd like 'em.

MRS. W. Like them, Jotham? Indeed, I do. And see—I will put them in a vase on the piano, too. Won't they look nice? (*Arranges in vase.*)

JOTHAM. Yas'm. (*Grins broadly, backs out L., eyeing flowers proudly.*) I am so bright—so smart—I can do anything—anything! (*Just at door stumbles and nearly falls, but bows low and gets safely off stage.*)

MRS. W. (*turns to the others*). The birth of the beauty-love in an undeveloped soul, Gertrude. Is it not sweet?

MRS. P. Yes, I—I—I guess so. It must be.

OLIVE. Well, here I am yet. I must—(*starts R.*)

MRS. P. You'll be at the Beethoven concert tomorrow night, of course, Olive?

OLIVE. No, indeed: it's too expensive for me.

MRS. P. Expensive? The tickets are high-priced, but *you* never mind that.

OLIVE. Don't I?

MRS. P. Why, I never knew you to before.

OLIVE. Well, this concert is too expensive altogether for people who must economize as Caleb and I have to, Mrs. Parker. Good-bye. (*Exits R.*)

MRS. P. How strange it seems to hear Olive talking of economy—and of Caleb's being busy!

MRS. W. But it's true. And you should see the effect on Jotham and Suke, too. I tell you, Gertrude, it's marvellous! (*Sits.*)

MRS. P. Is it really and honestly due to the subconscious mind, Nettie?

MRS. W. Of course—every bit. Didn't you tell me—

MRS. P. Yes, yes, I know, but I can hardly realize how you have done so much with it in so short a time!

MRS. W. I've been terribly in earnest, Gertrude.

MRS. P. You must have been.

MRS. W. And I've simply refused outright to see any-

thing at all, or anybody at all, from any point of view whatever but my own ideal one.

MRS. P. I see. It's wonderful, because—because—

MRS. W. Because what?

MRS. P. I came on purpose to tell you something startling.

MRS. W. Startling?

MRS. P. Positively overwhelming, Nettie.

MRS. W. About—

MRS. P. About Professor Baba Majarajah.

MRS. W. (*enthusiastically*). That wonderful man!

MRS. P. Wonderful? Humph! That's what we all thought at first, but—

MRS. W. But what?

MRS. P. He is an imposter!

MRS. W. Imposter? Impossible!

MRS. P. Yes, an imposter. Quite possible, I assure you, Nettie, and unmistakable.

MRS. W. But how? What? I don't understand.

MRS. P. He's no Hindu, at all—has never seen India.

MRS. W. Then who is he?

MRS. P. Merely a clever actor. He had learned his lectures well, and knew how to give them effectively, but you saw how he always fell flat in ordinary conversation, didn't you? And—and—he just roped us all in.

MRS. W. But his teachings—his beautiful philosophy?

MRS. P. Of course, his theories were good—perfect—the very best and highest of lofty truths, but the man was—was—well, mere negro, I guess. Isn't it mortifying?

MRS. W. A mere negro, you say? No, Gertrude—an immortal human soul, giving expression, as best he could, to the highest truth. Has he gone?

MRS. P. Forced to leave at once, when we found him out.

MRS. W. (*after reflection*). I don't care, Gertrude, as far as I am concerned, whether he was a Hindu or not.

MRS. P. You don't?

MRS. W. No. Why should I? Wherever he came from, or whatever or whoever he was, he was a Hindu to me,

because I thoroughly believed him to be, and my subconscious mind so accepted him.

MRS. P. (*bewildered by such logic*). Yes?

MRS. W. And even if his whole beautiful philosophy should have been a mass of pretty lies, concocted by his own fancy, it would still be truth to me, because I believed it all so thoroughly that I made it come true. Don't you see? According to my faith, it was done unto me.

MRS. P. Well, Nettie, I'm glad you take it so, for I was afraid you'd go all to pieces when you learned how you had been hoodwinked. (*Rises.*)

MRS. W. (*rises*). Hoodwinked? I? No, indeed! Whoever or whatever he was, he helped me to find myself—my real self—and it is I who have done all the rest.

MRS. P. Well, I must hurry. I was just obliged to tell you first, because I introduced him to you, and I wanted you to know I had not meant to deceive you—(*at door.*)

MRS. W. Yes, yes. But I tell you, Gertrude, to me he is still the Hindu professor, my mental ideal, and all that he has done for me—or rather taught me to do for myself, and the family for which I am responsible, can never be correctly estimated, nor properly compensated by any human agency.

MRS. P. Well, Nettie, I wish everybody else I introduced him to would feel a little that same way; but —

MRS. W. Tell them for me, "As a woman thinketh in her heart, so is she."

MRS. P. Yes, yes. I know. And everybody, that comes within the spell of her influence, is, as that same woman thinketh—it seems to have been in your case.

MRS. W. Of course. Aren't we all one—the great human family? Isn't my family a vital part of my very being? And as to the professor, did not Shakespeare say,

"There's nothing either good or bad,
But thinking makes it so."

Three weeks ago, Gertrude, you were trying to teach that to me. Now—

MRS. P. Now you have been promoted far above me.



But (*shaking hands*), I'll climb the ladder, Nettie. I want to see it all as you see it, and—I can, and I will. Good-bye.

MRS. W. Good-bye. (MRS. P. *exits R.*) Negro, indeed! Of course he is a Hindu! "As a woman thinketh in her heart"—(*walks L. while talking.*)

Enter JACK, R.

JACK. Mrs. Weeden.

MRS. W. (*turns, advances with outstretched hands*). Ah, Jack!

JACK. I wonder if Beth will see me a minute?

MRS. W. Of course!

JACK. I haven't bothered her—I've been patient. Now I feel she needs me.

MRS. W. She does, indeed, Jack. I'll call her. (*Exits C.*)

JACK. How long it seems since Beth and I were so happy together! Will it ever be that way again, I wonder? Can it? Mrs. Weeden says it will, and whatever she says seems to have a magic way of coming true. O it must!

BETH (*at C., looking through curtains*). Do you want me, Jack?

JACK. Haven't I always wanted you, Beth? (*Holds out hands.*)

Enter BETH, C.

BETH (*takes his hands*). I think I've been out of my senses for a few weeks, Jack. But—but—I've come back to them, Jack—I've come back!

JACK (*brokenly*). Never mind now—I—I—understand—better than you think. (*Feels pockets awkwardly.*) I—am sure—I—where is my handkerchief, I wonder? (*Fumbling for handkerchief, pulls out BETH's glove.*)

BETH (*lays hand on it, looking up at him with sudden complete understanding*). O Jack! Jack! My poor, lost glove!

CURTAIN.